

Others wince as Kerala celebrates top slot

Kerala is first in women and child development and child-friendly approach.

One person's happiness is another's misery. This applies equally to States involved in the high stakes game of competitive governance too. As Kerala trumped high-profile peers such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana to emerge on top of the Public Affairs Index 2018, celebrations in one place have been matched by excuses in others.

The losers have the argument that the checklist of the Public Affairs Centre, the Bengaluru-based think tank, is skewed in favour of Kerala: its focus is on social development and service delivery rather than big ticket investments. Kerala, according to the think tank, has emerged first overall among 30 States in the country, with a top ranking in four of the 10 parameters for big States. These include essential infrastructure, support to human development, women and child development and child-friendly approach. The ranking has not come without riders as the State has some ground to cover in areas such as protection of the environment and maintenance of law and order.

There was not much celebration though on the government's part. News reports about Kerala emerging on top in the PAI index with a brief matter-of-fact press note was all that was to be found on the Chief Minister's FB page. But, within a few hours, the posts were shared by close to a thousand people and viewed by over 30,000 Facebook users.

The parameters chosen for the study have given an edge for Kerala, a State that has won acclaim for its high human development indices. PAI 2018 comprises 10 broad themes, 30 focus subjects and 100 indicators as well as a special chapter on the children of India. While the theme on essential infrastructure includes power, water, roads and communication and housing, that on support to human development covers education and health.

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