

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dear friends of Goethe-Zentrum,

What a great feeling that after almost five years, I am writing again to you through our Guten Tag! Publication of this eagerly-anticipated newsletter had to be suspended following the early 2020 Corona pandemic, which was both unprecedented and catastrophic. For the next three years, it wreaked havoc causing thousands of deaths and decimating the livelihoods of millions of people across the globe. Let us not forget those who fell victims to the pandemic, and I pray in silence for those unfortunate ones, who had to abruptly leave, with their dreams unfulfilled.

The Goethe-Zentrum reached a historic milestone in November 2023 with the launch of its own building in Jawahar Nagar, which was the perfect fulfilment of a prolonged dream of everyone in Kerala, who loves German and Germany. With the establishment of an own Goethe Haus in Thiruvananthapuram, the Indo-German Language and Cultural Society has created a permanent home for Indo-German relationships to flourish further in Kerala, and we wish to thank each one of them, who helped us make this project come true.



As the world has now left behind the scars and nightmares of the horrendous pandemic and settled down in the normal mode, the Goethe-Zentrum is also back in full action with its vast offerings of German language courses, Goethe Certificate examinations and lots of cultural programmes. It is a matter of great pride for us that the globally-acclaimed cinema icon, Wim Wenders, visited Kerala in February and thousands of film lovers from Kerala and other parts of India thronged the cinema halls in Thiruvananthapuram to see him and watch his movies. As we move forward, it will be our endeavour to bring out more cultural programmes to other parts of Kerala, especially Kochi.

Along with these activities, we will strive to provide more seats for the Goethe Certificate examinations in Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, with the support of the regional head office of the Goethe-Institut in Delhi. Apart from conducting German courses and examinations, we

will also be organizing regular seminars and workshops for the German learners in Kerala on cultural and professional integration, which will play a decisive role in their ability to assimilate successfully into German society.



**Happy Reading and take care!**

Dr. Syed Ibrahim  
Director





## ■ Breaking Barriers Through Photography: Sina Niemeyer's Exhibition & Talk



On February 1, 2025, Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum, in collaboration with Neighbour Art Gallery, Kesavadasapuram, hosted a compelling exhibition and discussion featuring Berlin-based documentary photographer Sina Niemeyer.

Renowned for her work on gender-based violence and visual storytelling, she showcased how photography serves as a powerful

medium for activism and artistic expression. Through her insightful talk, she explored the challenges of visual depiction of trauma, emphasizing the delicate balance between artistic storytelling and ethical responsibility. The discussion dived into the evolving role of photography in raising awareness, illustrating how images can break silences, challenge social norms, and advocate for change. The highlight of the evening was an interactive portfolio review session, where four emerging photographers received direct feedback from Niemeyer. This segment encouraged critical discussions on visual ethics, artistic intent, and the impact of photography in shaping public discourse. The event attracted a diverse audience, including artists, students, journalists, and photography enthusiasts, fostering an engaging dialogue on the intersection of art, activism, and social responsibility.

## String Theory: A Harmonious Fusion of Cultures



The stage at Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum came alive with an extraordinary musical dialogue as String Theory, an internationally acclaimed ensemble led by German sitarist Sebastian Dreyer, captivated the audience with a mesmerizing performance.

Blending the intricate melodies of Indian classical ragas with contemporary global influences, the concert showcased the power of music as a universal language. The ensemble featured renowned musicians from Germany, India, Russia, South Africa, and South Korea, each bringing their unique cultural essence to the performance. The rhythmic brilliance of tabla maestro Retnasree Iyer, coupled with the artistic synergy of Tina 'Trilli' Bartel, Aleksandr Konanchuk, and Handong Ryu, created an immersive musical experience.

## ■ In Memory of Ustad Zakir Hussain: A Tribute In Jugalbandi

On February 6, 2025, the amphitheatre at Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum pulsed with rhythm and melody as music lovers gathered for 'In Memory of Ustad Zakir Hussain', a heartfelt tribute to the legendary tabla maestro.

The evening featured an enthralling jugalbandi, bringing together the talents of tabla artists Florian Schiertz and Prafulla Athalye, alongside sarangi virtuoso Dilshad Khan. The performance was a masterful confluence of intricate rhythms and melodic improvisations, embodying the

spirit of Indian classical music. Each note carried the essence of Ustad Zakir Hussain's legacy, celebrating his pioneering contributions to Indian and global music. The synergy between percussion and strings created an immersive experience, leaving the audience spellbound.

This special tribute concert was not only a celebration of Ustad Zakir Hussain's artistic brilliance but also a testament to the timeless power of classical music to inspire and unite generations. Drawing music enthusiasts from across the city, the event

## ■ Wim Wenders' Tour: A Celebration of Cinema



February 2025 was a special month for cinema lovers in Thiruvananthapuram, as the city hosted 'Wim Wenders – King of the Road: The India Tour', a retrospective of the legendary German filmmaker's works.

Organized in collaboration with the Film Heritage Foundation, Wim Wenders Stiftung, Goethe-Institut, Kerala Chalachitra Academy, and Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFD), the festival brought together film aficionados, students, and industry professionals to celebrate Wenders' cinematic legacy.

The event opened on February 10 with an exclusive masterclass by Wim Wenders, where he shared insights into his filmmaking journey, creative process, and artistic inspirations behind classics like Paris, Texas and Wings of Desire. Screenings at Kairali, Sree, and Nila theaters showcased his most acclaimed films, sparking engaging discussions on themes of travel, identity, and visual storytelling. Beyond cinema, the festival also served as a platform for cultural exchange.

reaffirmed Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum's commitment to fostering cultural heritage and musical excellence.



## ■ Berlinale Film Festival 2025: A Celebration of Cinema in Berlin



The 75th Berlinale Film Festival reaffirmed its status as a global cinematic powerhouse, standing alongside Cannes and Venice.

With around 400 films screened across 15 venues, the festival showcased a mix of blockbuster premieres, arthouse gems, and emerging filmmakers.

Navigating the Festival: While Berlin's sprawling venues added a charm, the city's public transport maze made travel amid screenings challenging. Many attendees found Tier scooters the swiftest way to commute.

Beyond the Screenings: Berlinale isn't just about films—it's also a hub for Q&As, industry talks, and networking. Conversa-

tions with directors, cast, and industry professionals provided deeper insights into the craft of filmmaking.

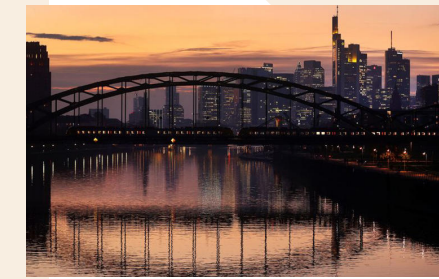
Red Carpet Magic: This year's festival welcomed stars like Timothée Chalamet, Robert Pattinson, Toni Collette, Tilda Swinton, and Benedict Cumberbatch, with an accessible and fan-friendly red carpet experience.

Festival Highlights: Standout films included Bong Joon-ho's Mickey 17, Richard Linklater's Blue Moon, and Eva Libertad's Sorda. However, some selections fell short of expectations.

## ■ Eurozone industrial output grows quicker than expected in January

Euro zone industrial production grew faster than forecast in January, driven by a quick expansion in Germany, which erases some but not all earlier losses, data from Eurostat showed on Thursday.

Industrial production in the 20 countries sharing the euro grew by 0.8% on the month, more than the expected 0.6%, as a 2.3% expansion in Germany offset negative readings in Italy and Spain, Eurostat said. Compared with a year earlier January's output was unchanged, an improvement on the -1.5% year-on-year reading



for December. However, output is still 3% down on its 2021 level.

Industrial activity in Germany, the bloc's biggest economy, has been in recession for

the past two years as high energy costs, intense competition from China, out of fashion car models and anaemic productivity growth have all cut into sales. But economists say German industry has likely hit the bottom, with U.S. tariffs now posing the biggest threat to recovery. Indeed, German manufacturing orders fell 7% in January, indicating that the sector remains fragile and the bottoming out has not yet been followed by any meaningful expansion. Still, potential fiscal stimulus announced by the incoming government could boost the fortunes of the sector.

## ■ Solar Power Overtakes Coal in the EU for the First Time!

In a historic shift, solar power has surpassed coal as a source of electricity in the European Union (EU) for the first time in 2024, according to a report by climate think tank Ember. Solar energy now contributes 11% of the EU's power, helping renewables reach 47% of the total energy mix—up from 34% in 2019.

The decline of fossil fuels continues, with coal generating only 10% of the EU's electricity and gas power falling for the fifth consecutive year. The shift toward clean energy has also helped the EU avoid nearly \$61 billion (€58.6 billion) in fossil fuel imports since 2019. The European Green Deal, coupled with soaring

gas prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war, has driven this rapid transition. EU leaders reaffirm their commitment to clean power and energy independence, even as other global powers take different paths. This marks a major milestone in Europe's journey toward a sustainable future!





## Danish Ministerial Delegation Explores Workforce Solutions at Goethe-Zentrum



On March 10, 2025, Goethe-Zentrum had the honour of hosting a high-level Danish ministerial delegation to explore how structured language training can help address Germany's skilled workforce shortage.

The delegation included senior representatives from Denmark's government, education, and healthcare sectors, such as the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Higher Education and Science, and the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration.

The discussions focused on bridging the workforce gap by equipping professionals with German language skills, enabling them to integrate seamlessly into Germany's job market. With Denmark facing similar challenges, particularly in the healthcare sector, the delegation also explored collaborations

with Kerala to introduce Danish language training for skilled professionals, facilitating their recruitment into Denmark's workforce.

The visit underscored the growing importance of language education in global workforce mobility and international recruitment.

Goethe-Zentrum remains committed to fostering meaningful partnerships that create career opportunities, strengthen cross-cultural connections, and contribute to international economic development.

## Bridging Cultures: Pre-Integration Training for German Learners

In recent years, Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum and Kochi have witnessed a growing number of young learners pursuing German language studies with aspirations of studying and working in Germany.

While mastering the language is a crucial step, adapting to Germany's cultural and social landscape remains a significant challenge for many. To support students in this transition, the Goethe-Institut, in collaboration with the European Union, has introduced a pre-integration sensitization programme aimed at providing essential cultural insights and social adaptation skills. As part of



this initiative, pre-integration trainers Ms. Lisa Beck and Ms. Regina Grasberger conducted interactive sessions at Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum, equipping students with valuable knowledge about German traditions, social etiquette, workplace culture, and daily life expectations. Through engag-

ing discussions and practical guidance, students gained a deeper understanding of life in Germany, helping them feel more confident and prepared for their journey abroad. This initiative reflects a proactive approach to international integration, ensuring that students not only succeed in their academic and professional endeavours but also adapt seamlessly to a new cultural environment.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Goethe-Institut and the European Union for their continued support in fostering global opportunities and strengthening cultural exchange.

## Indo-German Chamber of Commerce Delegation Explores Kerala's Startup Ecosystem

In a significant step towards fostering Indo-German collaboration, a delegation from the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC) visited Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) to gain insights into Kerala's rapidly growing startup ecosystem.

The delegation engaged in discussions with Mr. Anoop Ambika, CEO of KSUM, to understand the state government's initiatives in fostering entrepreneurship and attracting global investments. As part of the visit, the delegation also interacted with promising startup entrepreneurs, ex-



ploring their innovative ideas, business models, and growth potential. These discussions provided valuable perspectives on how Kerala's dynamic startup landscape aligns with Germany's innovation-driven

industries, opening avenues for cross-border investments, technological collaborations, and business partnerships.

The visit underscored the shared commitment to strengthening economic ties between India and Germany, facilitating opportunities for mutual growth and knowledge exchange. Dr. Syed Ibrahim, Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Thiruvananthapuram, was also present, reinforcing the importance of bilateral cooperation in entrepreneurship and innovation.

## Casting Ballots from Afar: German Nationals Vote in Kerala



In a rare and noteworthy event, four German nationals—Mr. Rainer Helbing, Ms. Uta Helbing, Ms. Evelyn Kirn, and Ms. Veronika Zhuravleva—exercised their democratic right by casting their postal votes for Germany's Federal Elections while visiting Kerala.

The voting took place on February 23, 2025, at the German Honorary Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram, marking the first instance of German citizens participating in their national elections from the state. The event highlights the importance of political engagement,

even when abroad. Germany allows its citizens to vote remotely through postal ballots, ensuring that every voice is heard, no matter where they are in the world.

For these travellers, casting their vote from another continent underlined their commitment to democracy and civic responsibility.

As global mobility increases, instances of expatriates and travellers voting from foreign locations are becoming more common. This occasion serves as a reminder that technology and international cooperation enable citizens to remain connected to their homeland's democratic processes, regardless of distance.

The German Honorary Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram played a crucial role in facilitating the process, providing a space for these citizens to exercise their rights seamlessly, ensuring their ballots reached the appropriate electoral offices in Germany.

Their participation is a testament to the idea that democracy knows no borders, and every vote matters in shaping a nation's future—no matter where it is cast.

## Solar-Powered Irrigation Project Inaugurated in Trivandrum



In a significant step towards sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation, the German Consulate General in Bengaluru, in collaboration with Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum, has successfully funded and set up a solar-powered well irrigation system on the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram.

This initiative, implemented in partnership with the Sangamaithy farmers' col-

lective, aims to provide a steady and reliable water supply for farmland, ensuring improved agricultural productivity and resource efficiency.

The system was officially inaugurated on November 9, 2025, by H.E. Achim Burkart, the German Consul General, in the presence of local farmers and representatives from Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum. The project was funded under the Kleinstprojekt initiative of the German Federal Government, highlighting a strong commitment to eco-friendly farming, water conservation, and sustainable energy solutions.

By utilizing solar energy to power irrigation, the project reduces reliance on erratic water sources and conventional electricity, making farming more resilient and cost-effective. This not only supports year-round cultivation but also minimizes the environmental impact of traditional irri-

gation methods. Beyond its technical benefits, the initiative serves as a model for sustainable farming practices, demonstrating how international collaboration can contribute to local environmental solutions. Goethe-Zentrum Trivandrum is proud to be part of this effort, reinforcing its role in promoting global cooperation, sustainability, and community development.





## Germany's Bundestag votes in favour of reforming the 'debt brake'



The multibillion-euro package loosens borrowing limits and allows new investments in defense, infrastructure and climate. The plan is backed by the conservative CDU/CSU alliance, center-left SPD and Greens.

The conservative CDU/CSU bloc of the German election winner Friedrich Merz and the Social Democrats (SPD) passed with the help of the Greens a historic decision on 18th of March for a massive increase in state borrowing.

The debt reform plan, put forward jointly by the conservatives and the SPD, would exempt defense spending from the country's constitutionally enshrined debt brake and create a special €500 billion (\$545 billion) fund for infrastructure investment.

The compromise includes the allocation of €100 billion for the climate and economic transformation fund. Support from the Greens ensured Merz the two-thirds par

liamentary majority to pass the planned constitutional amendments. Merz, whose conservative bloc is in negotiations with the SPD to form a new government following last month's elections, wants to secure the funds before a new parliament convenes on March 25 — at which point the CDU/CSU tie-up with the SPD and Greens would no longer have the majority necessary to pass the measure.

In Germany, the federal government and the 16 states are obliged to balance their books and are practically prohibited from taking out extra loans. No other G7 country has such strict limits on new borrowing. The rules are enshrined in the Basic Law, Germany's constitution, and apply—with minor differences—both at the federal level and in the 16 states, or "Länder" in German.

Paragraph 3 of Article 109 of the Basic Law states that "the budgets of the Federation and the Länder shall, in principle, be balanced without revenue from credits." This means that the government may only spend as much money as it takes in, primarily from taxes and levies. This requirement is known as the "debt brake."

The German industry, which has been reeling under a long wave of downward growth, is very much looking forward to a rejuvenation through this new amendment.

## Berlinala: 'Das Deutsche Volk' gives voice to Hanau victims

Five years after one of the deadliest racially motivated attacks in Germany, a new documentary film follows the victims' families and their search for answers. "Who belongs to Germany and who doesn't?"

This is a central question that drove director Marcin Wierchowski in his documentary "Das Deutsche Volk" (The German People). The work premiered at the Berlinala, marking the fifth anniversary of the racially-motivated shootings that shook Germany on February 19, 2020.

That night, a far-right extremist terrorist killed nine people and injured five more in the city of Hanau, near Frankfurt, in the state of Hesse. After his rampage, the perpetrator returned to his apartment, where



he killed his mother and then committed suicide. It was found that the gunman, 43-year-old Tobias R. — identified by his first name and last initial in keeping with German privacy laws — had published a racist "manifesto" online before committing his murders. Documents promoting conspiracy theories and far-right views were also found in his home. At the time, the far-

## Carnival: A 2,000-year-old tradition

It all kicks off on 11:11 am on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, which is known as Weiberfastnacht (Women's Carnival Day).

In Germany's Rhineland region—among other places—thousands of people wearing colorful costumes join several days of street celebrations. In Cologne, the motto this year is "FasteLOVEnd – wenn Dräum wider blöhe" (Carnival — when dreams bloom again). The slogan has the feel of the flower power era of the 60s and 70s, a time when people turned to a carefree "peace and love" attitude in reaction to global crises.



People in Cologne have been taking that break from everyday life since as far back as 2,000 years ago — that's where one of the roots of today's carnival celebration lies. "In difficult times, carnival provides comfort, joy, community and also a little hope," explains Christoph Kuckelkorn, president of Cologne's Carnival festival committee.

right populist party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), was already contributing to normalizing strong anti-immigrant positions. Filmmaker Marcin Wierchowski immediately began documenting the developments surrounding the Hanau shootings. He ended up accompanying the victims' families and survivors for nearly five years to make his film.

His documentary, shot in black-and-white, follows the families in their grief and their battle to obtain proper information surrounding the death of their loved ones. The victims' relatives have denounced the authorities for having failed to deal with the circumstances that led to the murders critically — and for having, at times, avoided addressing certain aspects of the investigation.

## Explore Germany: Three Must - Visit Destinations

### Berlin: A City of History and Innovation



Berlin, Germany's dynamic capital, is a city where the past meets the future in a sublime tapestry. Steeped in history, it bears witness to key moments—from the Prussian era to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Iconic landmarks like the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin Wall Memorial, and Reichstag Building tell powerful stories of resilience and reunification.

For historians and culture enthusiasts, Museum Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site, offers world-class museums showcasing ancient artifacts, art, and German heritage. Berlin's top universities, including Humboldt University and Freie Universität, make it a hub for research, innovation, and academic excellence.

But Berlin isn't just about history—it's a global hotspot for startups, technology, and the arts. The city's thriving creative scene includes cutting-edge galleries, alternative music, and a world-famous nightlife. From historic streets to futuristic co-working spaces, Berlin embodies an energy that draws students, innovators, and dreamers from across the globe.

Whether you're exploring its past or shaping its future, Berlin offers an unforgettable experience.

### Heidelberg: Germany's City of Knowledge and Romance

Nestled along the Neckar River, Heidelberg is a city that blends academic excellence, historic charm, and cultural vibrancy. Home to Heidelberg University, Germany's oldest and one of Europe's most prestigious institutions, the city has long been a hub for scholars, poets, and philosophers.

Its picturesque Old Town (Altstadt), with cobblestone streets and baroque architecture, creates a timeless atmosphere, while the iconic Heidelberg Castle offers spectacular



lar views of the city. The famous Philosopher's Walk, a scenic trail along the river, has inspired great thinkers for centuries.

Beyond its historical allure, Heidelberg boasts a thriving student and professional community. Its lively cafés, cultural festivals, and intellectual atmosphere make it an ideal place for both study and career growth. Whether you seek academic inspiration or simply wish to enjoy a city rich in culture and natural beauty, Heidelberg offers a perfect blend of tradition and modernity.

### Munich: Tradition, Culture, and Economic Power



Munich, the capital of Bavaria, is a city where rich traditions meet modern innovation. From the historic Marienplatz, where the famous Glockenspiel captivates visitors, to the English Garden, one of the world's

largest urban parks, this vibrant city offers a perfect blend of heritage and leisure.

Beyond its cultural appeal, Munich is an economic and academic powerhouse. It is

home to global corporations, cutting-edge research institutions, and top-ranking universities like Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) and Technical University of Munich (TUM), making it a prime destination for students and professionals alike. The city's diverse attractions include BMW Welt, the world-famous Oktoberfest, and the prestigious Pinakothek museums, ensuring that there's always something to explore. Whether you're looking for academic excellence, career opportunities, or cultural immersion, Munich offers a dynamic environment where tradition and progress coalesce in a perfect symmetry.

News contributed by





The Goethe-Zentrum offers the following German language courses across the levels A1 to B2.2, aligned with the European

Framework of Reference for Foreign Languages. These courses prepare the students for the internationally valid Goethe

Certificate Examinations conducted under the auspices of the Goethe-Institut in Munich, Germany.

## German Language Courses - 2025 Schedule

Offered by Goethe-Zentrum | Locations: Trivandrum & Kochi

Course Duration	Levels Offered	Reg. Starts	Int. Exam Dates
30 June – 08 August	A1, A2, B1, B2.1, B2.2	A1 – 15 May	09, 11, 12 August
		Others – 23 June	
25 August – 13 October	A1, A2, B1, B2.1, B2.2	A1 – 15 July	14, 15, 16 October
		Others – 20 August	
22 October - 29 November	A1, A2, B1, B2.1, B2.2	A1 – 15 September	01, 02, 03 December
		Others – 16 October	

For corporate training programs and other individual courses, please contact the Zentrum for more information. For course details in Kochi please visit our website. Website: [trivandrum.german.in](http://trivandrum.german.in) • Email: [info@goethe-zentrum.org](mailto:info@goethe-zentrum.org) • Phone: 0471 2300777 / +91 9745160067

## GERMAN FILM FESTIVAL 2025

Presented by Cochin Film Society in association with Goethe-Zentrum and Chavara Cultural Centre

Venue: Chavara Public Library Hall, Chavara Cultural Centre, Kochi.

Dates: April 22 & 23, 2025

**German Film Festival 2025:** A curated showcase of acclaimed contemporary films from Germany. This two-day event brings together thought-provoking nar-

atives, powerful performances, and diverse cultural perspectives—offering audiences in Kochi a unique cinematic experience.



## Goethe-Zentrum Kochi Centre Turns 10!



We are very happy to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our centre in Kochi. Under the able leadership of Dr. Joseph Sebastian, the centre has today become a flagbearer of German language courses and Goethe Certificate Examinations.