

## *The Story of Chmpakulam Moolam Boat Race*

Kerala, with its winding stretches of backwaters, is famous for its native boat races held in different parts of the State in the harvest season. The Champakulam boat race is the first race during the season and has a tradition of centuries. The festivities include spectacular water floats, decorated boats, Vanchipattu - the song of the oarsmen and the most thrilling Chundanvallom race. Chundans are a category of boats over 100 feet in length with raised prows. The foreign rulers first called them snake boats. The traditional annual boat race of Kerala begins in late June and early July at Champakulam. This festival is known as Moolam Vallamkali . Moolam signifies a Malayalam asterism (star or Nakshathram), Moolam of the month Mithunam. The oldest and most popular snake boat race in Kerala, and is closely connected to the Sree Krishna Temple at Ambalappuzha. The race is held on the Champakulam Lake on the moolam day of the Malayalam month Midhunam, the day of the installation of the deity at the Temple. The Moolam boat race was inaugurated by Kodikunnil Suresh, MP. Thomas K. Thomas, MLA, District Collector Renu Raj and others attended. The Moolam boat race, the season opener, was held after a pandemic-induced gap of two years. As such, the excitement was palpable. Thousands of boat race buffs turned up on the banks of the Pampa river making the atmosphere electric. As usual, prior to the race, representatives of the Travancore Devaswom Board visited Champakulam Madathil Temple, Mappilassery family, and Kalloorkad St. Mary's Basilica and performed rituals. With the Moolam boat race, the traditional boat race season has begun in the State. The State will witness a host of races in various districts in the coming months.