

## HINDU BUSINESS LINE

Ayurveda is now the toast of God's Own Country

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# Ayurveda is now the toast of God's Own Country

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From a 'must-see' destination, God's Own Country is evolving as an 'experience' destination in quick time, helped in no small measure by the latest flush of international approbation.

The 'been there, seen all' crooning of those who trudge back home could slowly give in to 'be there, feel it' exhortations from gratified customers reliving the stay back in Kerala.

### INTO LIMELIGHT

From travel and sight-seeing, the enduring themes about Kerala tourism are slowly seeing a shift-over to ayurveda and responsible tourism.

It is not if they did not exist earlier.

It is just that they have been thrown right into limelight due to some fortuitous

► *The State is also witnessing emergence of new players representing Ayurveda, tourism, Ayurveda resorts and wellness centres*

circumstances developing overseas. Kerala Tourism made a big show of it at Berlin, where it clinched the silver prize at the ITB Golden City Gate Awards (billed as Oscars of tourism) in the form of Das Goldene Stättor (Golden City Gate) for the print campaign on ayurveda.

"It is another big endorsement to the marketing initiatives which have helped catapult Kerala as a must-see destination," says A.P. Anil Kumar, tourism minister.

Suman Billa, Secretary, Tourism, said the award acknowledged attempts to provide a glimpse of the State's rich Ayurveda traditions be-

fore the world.

The recognition for Ayurveda in this manner could not come at a more opportune time. Already, the private sector has made a big presence in the ayurvedic wellness sector in the State.

It can become a niche for assured foreign exchange earnings, as there is a growing trend of tourists visiting the State as wellness seekers.

Karimpuzha Raman, Managing Director, Care Kerala, a confederation of ayurvedic industries and Kinfra, says that if properly branded the wellness industry in Kerala could become a Rs 2,000-crore industry.

K. Sreekumar, marketing consultant specialised in ayurveda, points out that the industry in Kerala is growing at the rate of 15-20 per cent and the market size is estimated at Rs 800 crore.

Recent growth in the number of ayurveda colleges in Kerala will result in taking the number of qualified ayurveda medical practitioners to 15,000 by 2015 from the present 10,000.

A major impediment stands in the way of ayurveda service industry today is that the sector has not yet been rated as a main stream methodology of treatment.

### UNCTAD ACCLAIM

To attract corporates and IT professionals, Sreekumar suggested ayurvedic treatments be included in Medicaid policies of insurance companies.

S. Sajikumar, managing director of Dhathri Ayurveda, says a large number of international tourists visit Kerala for a truly refreshing and rejuvenating holiday.

The State is also witnessing emergence of new players representing Ayurveda tourism, tour operations, Ayurveda resorts, wellness centres, and diet food manufacturers and so on.

Meanwhile, just the other day, a huge endorsement of Kerala's brand of sustainable tourism with its enduring eco-friendliness and inclusiveness themes came in from UNCTAD.

The accolades for Kerala's model of Responsible Tourism came at a recent meeting of UNCTAD in Geneva, which brought together experts, policymakers and diplomats from developing and developed countries as well as representatives of international organisations and civil society.

"Kerala has become a model for tourism development for entire India," observed Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD.



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