



**Department of Tourism**

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: [info@keralatourism.org](mailto:info@keralatourism.org)

[marketing@keralatourism.org](mailto:marketing@keralatourism.org)

[www.keralatourism.org](http://www.keralatourism.org)

**Press Release**

**RT has a key role in inclusive tourism development: Top officials at Kerala Tourism-The Hindu Group conclave**

**Kochi, Feb 1:** Responsible Tourism can play a significant role in the development of inclusive tourism, observed top tourism administrators at a session at the two-day conclave 'Kerala for All – Tourism Without Barriers', jointly organised by Kerala Tourism and The Hindu Group.

Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Shri K. Biju, Secretary, Kerala Tourism, were the participants at the session 'Vision Kerala for All – Shaping the Future of Kerala Tourism.'

"Achieving this goal is not limited to inclusive innovations in construction alone. There must be awareness across society, from the grassroots, regarding disability-friendly, elderly-friendly, women- and child-friendly measures," Shri Suman Billa noted.

"If a ramp created for persons with disabilities is too steep or too shallow, it becomes unusable. Such initiatives should not be undertaken merely to meet prescribed standards. Awareness is required at all levels, from construction workers upwards," he emphasised.

Shri Suman Billa observed that inclusive development is commonly perceived as being limited to wheelchair users. This concept needs to take care of the visually impaired, those with speech and hearing impairments, senior citizens, women, children and others.

He stressed that thinking must move beyond changes in construction practices to areas such as multimedia applications and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.

Both Shri Suman Billa and Shri Biju highlighted that Responsible Tourism can play a major role in creating awareness at the local level.



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The initiative, which began two decades ago, has today brought Kerala Tourism considerable global recognition. Similar awareness-building and sensitisation efforts need to be fostered further.

They also pointed out that participation of Responsible Tourism units should be scaled up in this direction.

Noting that a dedicated mechanism is required for inclusive tourism development, Shri Biju said advanced technologies are now available to support such initiatives, and the differently abled community can offer substantial assistance in this regard.

He said consolidating suggestions received from international conferences and discussions would be beneficial when framing new standards. He added that implementing these initiatives in collaboration with local self-government institutions is under active consideration.

The Hindu Kerala Resident Editor S. Anandan moderated the session.