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PRESS RELEASE

Tourism Minister P. C. Vishnunadh launches 'Brand Wayanad'

Kalpetta, Oct 6: Tourism, Cinema and Cultural Affairs Minister Shri. P. C. Vishnunadh today launched the 'Brand Wayanad' initiative of the Tourism Department as part of the State Government's 100-day action programme.

The initiative seeks to showcase the region's natural beauty, agricultural and heritage attractions and cultural traditions to the audiences across India and abroad.

Shri Vishnunadh said the government's policy is to collaborate with other tourist destinations in the country rather than compete with them. As part of this approach, joint tourism circuits involving destinations with similar characteristics, including destinations like Coorg and Mysore and countries like Sri Lanka, are being considered.

The Brand Wayanad initiative seeks to showcase the district's natural beauty, agricultural and heritage attractions, and rich cultural traditions to the world. The Minister urged people not to spread misinformation suggesting that the entire district was unsafe, pointing out that the recent natural disaster had affected only two wards of Meppadi panchayat — Mundakkai and Chooralmala.

On the occasion, the minister also launched new Life Experience Trails of the Responsible Tourism Mission and a guided travel programme covering the Thirunelli circuit, a visit to Chekadi Farm and a coffee experience.

As part of Kerala Tourism's promotional activities, the state's traditional art forms and tableaux will be presented at this year's Mysore Dasara. From next year, Onam celebrations will be organised with the same grandeur as Mysore Dasara, he said.

The minister informed that a draft policy to grant industry status to tourism, a long-standing demand of the sector, has been submitted for the Cabinet's approval. Homestay owners in the state would be divided into three clusters and provided specialised training. Increasing the average length of tourists' stay, bringing Malabar tourism into the mainstream and making KTDC establishments financially viable are among the government's priorities, he added.

Kerala Tourism Director Smt. M. Anjana, who delivered the welcome address, said Brand Wayanad was a simple idea with a larger objective. "We want the world to see Wayanad as a destination with a distinct identity," she added.



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The initiative also aims to ensure that every rupee generated through tourism empowers farmers, artisans, tribal families and young entrepreneurs who considered Wayanad their home.

The initiative includes responsible tourism measures and homestay renovation aimed at positioning Wayanad as a safe and sustainable global tourism destination. Wayanad coffee, spices, traditional rice varieties and honey, along with local cuisine, agricultural life, tribal heritage and rural experiences, will be linked with tourism.

The Tourism Department also plans to position the Geographical Indication-tagged Wayanad Robusta Coffee as a premium brand in global markets through a 'farm-to-cup' model.

Mananthavady MLA Smt.Usha Vijayan, Kerala Tourism Additional Director (General) Shri Sumit Kumar Thakur, Vythiri Panchayat President Shri C. V. Rajan, Vice-President Smt. Valsala Sadanandan and Ward member Smt. Sini George were among those who attended the inaugural function.

As part of efforts to preserve tribal heritage, the En Ooru heritage village will be expanded. A Tribal University and Heritage Knowledge Zone will also be established at an estimated cost of RS 50 crore.

Other initiatives under Brand Wayanad include the Wayanad CSR Exchange (land portal), aimed at facilitating corporate participation, and an e-waste-free drive for environmental protection will also be implemented as part of Brand Wayanad.

As part of the curtain-raiser programme, the 'En Ooru' Live Experience Zone will open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both days. Visitors will have an opportunity to experience the traditional way of the tribal communities, a tribal food festival, heritage and handicraft exhibitions and community-based experiences.

As part of the Brand Wayanad programme, experts also addressed sessions on various aspects of the district.

Biodiversity Lead at the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation Shri Saneesh C. S. spoke on 'Nature and Wildlife Diversity'; writer and Kerala Sahitya Akademi **Chairman** Shri Kalpetta Narayanan spoke on 'Culture'; and social worker Shri. T. Sivaraj of Uravu Indigenous Science & Technology Study Centre delivered a talk on 'Crafts'.

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