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Press Release

Kerala as a global model: Global Responsible Tourism conference concludes

Kozhikode, Feb. 08: Foreign delegates at the Global Responsible Tourism Conference, which concluded in Beypore, Kozhikode, today, emphasised that Kerala's people-centric model sets it apart on the global responsible tourism map. They noted that even leading countries have much to learn from Kerala's approach.

Kevin Phun, Director of the Centre for Responsible Tourism in Singapore, noted that while the country is seen as a leader in responsible tourism, its narrative primarily focuses on sustainable waste management. He emphasised that community participation in tourism remains limited due to the industry's specific nature.

In contrast, he said, Kerala's responsible tourism initiatives are exemplary. There is extensive participation from ordinary people, and the model has significantly improved their quality of life, making it a global benchmark.

Oshan Lepcha, Coordinator at the Association for Conservation and Tourism, said rural tourism is key to responsible tourism. The initial focus in the Northeastern states was on bringing remote villages into modern development opportunities. The idea that development can be driven from within villages themselves was inspired by Kerala's model.

Renu Sharma, Co-founder of HTO House, highlighted how a Kerala Tourism report inspired Himachal Pradesh to adopt responsible tourism practices. She mentioned support from Rupesh Kumar, CEO of the Kerala RT Mission Society, for implementing a responsible tourism project at her resort, which began with a community kitchen modelled on the Kudumbashree model. Currently, the "Mystic Village" project is being promoted at the government level throughout Himachal Pradesh.

Kerala Tourism Additional Secretary Jagadish D and Kerala RT Mission Society CEO Rupesh Kumar spoke at the valedictory session, along with presentations by Pushpa Thapa from Homestay Network Nepal and Binu Kuriakose from the Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society.

Komal Daria, founder of Women Forward Tours, highlighted the need for greater representation of women in public spaces during a panel on gender equality in tourism. UN Women's Veda Bharadwaj warned against linking tourism with cultural practices that often exclude women. Associate Professor Nirmala Ranasinghe noted that economic empowerment is key to achieving gender equality and praised Kerala's responsible tourism initiatives for their positive impact.

Ayush Prasen, CEO of the Community Homestay Network, highlighted the importance of government support for women-led tourism. Dileep Kumar, founder of Imperience Hotels, stressed the private sector's role in promoting tourism as a women-friendly industry.



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Indu Krishna, founder of Escape Now, cautioned against relying on online ratings for women-friendly accommodations in inclusive tourism. Anik Sanzoni, head of a Paris homestay network, stressed the importance of increasing women's representation in hospitality, highlighting that the success of the Paris model was rooted in female leadership.

Geethu Mohandas, founder of Let's Go for a Camp, emphasised that attacks on individual women impact the entire women's community. Manisha Pandey, Global Director of ICRT, highlighted the need for practical and actionable recommendations for inclusive tourism practices within complex government systems.

Presentations on successful models in responsible tourism were made by Prof. Minu M Gopal, Resource Person, Kerala RT Mission; S. Swaminathan, Secretary, Kerala Travel Mart, on the role of the tourism industry in responsible tourism; Shijin Parambath, Managing Director of BRDC, on Bekal Tourism's success model; Sreekala Lakshmi, District Coordinator, RT Mission; Williams Mathew, founder of Western Ghats Tropical, on agri-tourism; and Rahul Narayanan, founder of Kavvayi Stories.

On the theme of sustainable marketing in responsible tourism, speakers included Manisha Pandey; Richmond Hammond, Director, Train Traveller Media; Cassie Mead, Director, CM Communications, Australia; Shelton Pinheiro, Executive Creative Director, Stark Communications; Vancheshwaran, KTM member; Neelakandh Pararath, founder of WebCRS; and Rajan Rai, Subject Matter Expert, Dexian India.

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