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PRESS RELEASE

**Global Responsible Tourism group cheers *Puli Kali* in town
Visit part of Cultural Exchange Programme of Dept. of Tourism**

Thrissur, Sept. 08: The excitement of a group of Responsible Tourism (RT) exponents from around the world knew no bounds as they bumped into a group of 'human-tigers' on the day of *Puli Kali*, the highlight of the Onam celebration here today.

The tourists from 10 countries are in the state for an eight-day Cultural Exchange Programme, organised by the State RT Mission Society of the Department of Tourism, coinciding with the Onam celebrations.

The September 4-11 programme, an initiative suggested by Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas, is part of Kerala Tourism's calibrated strategy to give greater visibility to the state's harvest festival in all its grandeur.

The awe-struck RT group enjoyed *Puli Kali Mahotsavam* here, and the excitement was palpable. A few of them even tried the *Puli Kali* costume and some others danced to the rhythmic movements of men disguised as tigers during their performance at Swaraj Round in the town.

RT Mission Society CEO Rupeshkumar K said the purpose of the visit of the RT group was to give them a first-hand experience of this art form as well as introduce it to a global audience.

Earlier, the group was accorded a warm welcome at Sitaram Mill Lane and they had a close look at the nuanced and diligent preparations of each *Puli Kali* artiste prior to their performance. The group also interacted with the artistes.

The tourists are from the UK, France, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Romania. The group also included RT leaders, academicians, researchers, and tour operators from other states. This is the first time such a group of foreign tourists visit Kerala to celebrate Onam and witness *Puli Kali*.

The group's itinerary includes various destinations in the state to take a close look at Kerala's RT model, which has successfully leveraged Kerala's heritage and cultural diversity to promote sustainable tourism development and the economic empowerment of local communities.

The group will be in the state capital tomorrow to witness the Onam pageantry that marks the finale of the Onam Week Celebrations.

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