



## Department of Tourism

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### Press Release

## Kerala's RT mission has set a global model of women empowerment in tourism: Tourism Minister

### Shri PA Mohamed Riyas opens Kerala Responsible Tourism Festival

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 11:** Kerala's Responsible Tourism has been recognized globally for strengthening women empowerment and supporting rural economy through sustainable and inclusive initiatives, Tourism Minister Shri PA Mohamed Riyas said here today.

Shri Riyas was inaugurating the five-day Kerala Responsible Tourism Festival at Kanakakkunnu Palace grounds in the city.

The event is organized by the Responsible Tourism Mission Society with support from the state Department of Tourism.

Shri V K Prasanth MLA presided over the inaugural function while Smt Sikha Surendran IAS delivered the welcome address.

With 26000 RT units across Kerala, around 1.5 lakh families are direct beneficiaries of RT mission's various projects across the state, said the Minister.

The fact that 80% of RT units are led by women shows the success of Kerala's gender-inclusive tourism and the state's commitment towards UN's Gender Inclusive Tourism policy, said Shri Riyas.

In the 2025-26 state budget earmarked an amount of Rs 4 crore rupees for women entrepreneurs for providing loans up to 15 lakhs at an interest rate of 4%, he said.

Also 50% of the total budget allocated for RT mission is set apart for women, he added.

Responsible tourism had been an integral component of Kerala Tourism's accelerated growth in recent years. Kerala Tourism has received around 14 awards in national and international level for its initiatives in RT, said Shri Riyas.

RT mission has made possible diverse experiences for travelers such as Agri farm tourism, Food tourism and projects that link tourism with cultural and ecological conservation that elevate rural destinations like Kanthalloor and Beypore to global level, the Minister noted.



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The five-day festival aims to give a strong market support to RT units facilitating them to sell their products and also seek new business opportunities by collaborating with tour operators, vloggers, resort owners etc. said the Minister.

Tourism Director Smt Sikha Surendran said more than 20000 people have been given training and skilling in various domains through RT Mission.

RT Mission's initiatives have been inclusive of local communities and are aimed at strengthening rural economy and social and economic empowerment of women, she added.

Shri Rupeshkumar K, CEO Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission Society said RT Mission has facilitated the economic upliftment of rural communities as many villages are now part of RT tourist destination.

Thirty three Grama Panchayaths that helped in enhancing the performance of the RT units in their region were honoured at the event.

At the event, an MoU for implementing interest subvention scheme for women in RT units was exchanged by Women Development Corporation Managing Director Bindu VC and Shri Rupeshkumar K, CEO Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission Society.

Smt. Sreedhanya Suresh IAS; Shri K R Cleetus, Ward Councilor; Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Councillor; Shri Jose Pradeep, Chairman KTM Society, Shri M R Narayanan, President, South Kerala Hoteliers Union; and Dr. Peeja Rajan, State coordinator UN Women were also be present at the inaugural function.

The festival serves as a venue for RT units from across Kerala to showcase their initiatives that took tourism to the grassroot levels as a sustainable and inclusive economic activity with active participation of local communities.

A range of traditional products and artifacts, bearing the imprint of RT units from different parts of Kerala, are exhibited at the festival, which has around 120 stalls selling products made by members and artisans of RT units.

Food stalls dishing out full-course meals and delicacies from different parts of Kerala at the festival promises visitors a rare opportunity to relish authentic cuisine from up north Kasaragod to the state capital.

**Ends**