



**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**

**Experts call for a greater focus on eco-tourism that helps preserve forests**

**Varkala, Oct 19:** Wildlife and Environment Experts have stressed the need for eco-tourism that preserves forests in their entirety.

Speaking at a session on Wildlife Conservation and Sustainable Travel at the ongoing Yaanam travel literary festival, wildlife photographer Balan Madhavan said the emphasis on eco-tourism is leading to a surge in visitors to protected forests, significantly impacting their natural environment and wildlife.

“Substantial changes are needed in the standards governing eco-tourism activities,” he said.

Journalist and environmentalist C Rahim opined that the imbalance in nature causes human-wildlife conflict, making it essential to maintain this balance.

Bharat Bhavan Member-Secretary and playwright Pramod Payyanur also participated in the discussion moderated by Shamil Nahas. A U Faizal Khan, a journalist who has written extensively on football, art and cinema, in his conversation with Yaanam Festival director Sabin Iqbal in a session titled ‘Cultural Explorations: Cinema, Football and Art’, shared his experiences going to the 2010 South Africa World Cup and 2014 Brazil World Cup, Cannes Film Festival and Venice Biennale.

“My father, Mohammed Usman, was a popular footballer from Kerala, and my daughter and I are football fanatics,” he said. “My father passed away a few months before the South Africa World Cup, and it was a very personal experience for me to attend the event.”

Mr Khan also remembered interacting with former Real Madrid and Costa Rica goalkeeper Keylor Navas when he attended Cannes Film Festival weeks before the Champions League final against Liverpool for the premiere of his biopic ‘Hombre de fe’.

“I asked Keylor whether the then Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane allowed him to attend Cannes when the Champions League final was around the corner, and he replied, Zidane is also here,” he recalled.

On attending the Venice Biennale, Mr Khan said, “It’s an amazing experience to be provoked by the finest artists around the globe whose works are presented in the factory warehouses and small buildings in the beautiful city of Venice.”

Afeeda Sherin, a 22-year-old solo traveller from Kerala, shared her experience of embarking on her first international trip to Mauritius.



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“My greatest asset is not the act of travelling to different countries or regions, but rather a willingness to explore anywhere in the world,” Ms Sherin said.

The festival, themed 'Celebrating Words and Wanderlust,' featured lectures and panel discussions with travel vloggers, journalists, photographers, and others.

It also included literature and readings on various destinations, as well as conversations with writers, which made the event particularly engaging.

**ENDS**