



## Department of Tourism

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### Press Release

## Govt making all efforts to turn Kerala into an experiential tourism hub: Minister Riyas



- **Minister felicitates Kanthalloor panchayat body for winning national tourism award**

**Thiruvananthapuram, Oct. 25:** The State government is making relentless efforts to turn every village in the state into a sterling model of sustainable and inclusive experiential tourism, Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas said today.

He was speaking after felicitating people's representatives and administrative staff of Kanthalloor village panchayat in Idukki district, which bagged the prestigious 'Gold' award of the Government of India for the Best Rural Tourism projects, here on Wednesday.

"Villages and local communities can contribute immensely to the government's relentless efforts to turn Kerala into a major experiential tourism hub", Shri Riyas said.

On the occasion, the Minister handed over the national honour received by the state to Kanthalloor Village Panchayat President Shri P T Mohandas.

Lauding the joint efforts of the state's Responsible Tourism Mission (RTM) and Kanthalloor panchayat, the Minister said the activities successfully carried out in the panchayat has set a sterling model of promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism development, and went on to become the first village in the state to achieve this national honour.

Kanthalloor where the STREET (Sustainable, Tangible, Responsible, Experiential, Ethnic, Tourism) tourism project of RTM was implemented won the honour after an eight-month-



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long extensive evaluation of rural village projects in the length and breadth of the country. In all 767 projects from around the country vied for honours, and, five of them won 'Gold', 10 were selected for 'Silver' and 20 for 'Bronze', he said.

The 'Best Tourism Village Competition' was conducted with an aim to make tourism a major driver of rural development and community well-being by identifying villages committed to activities that promote economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Also, Kanthalloor has the distinction of being the country's first panchayat to implement women-friendly tourism, for which several programmes were held in collaboration with UN Women. As part of this the 'destination security' scheme was implemented and special women tour packages drawn up, Shri Riyas said.

The Minister also noted that the panchayat stands as the first rural local body to implement a tourism project utilising the plan fund.

Presiding over the function, Tourism Director Shri P B Nooh urged the panchayats in the state to engage in activities that further explore the immense potential of state's rural tourism.

"Projecting Kerala's unique topographical features, hospitality, traditional cuisine, culture, communal harmony and life style before the tourists will benefit the local community thus expanding the possibilities of Kerala Tourism to come up with unique and innovative products in future", he said.

Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission (RTM) Coordinator and state Rural Tourism Nodal Officer Shri K Rupesh Kumar welcomed the gathering and proposed a vote of thanks.

Tourism Additional Director (General) Shri S Prem Krishnan also spoke.

Besides giving away the mementos to the people's representatives and administrative staff of Kanthalloor village panchayat the Minister also felicitated UN Women India Kerala co-ordinator Dr Peeja Rajan, and RTM's women-friendly tourism trainers on the occasion.

Also, RTM's unit members - Shri Pratap A and Shri Murali K B who were the winners of 2021 Kerala State Handicraft Awards were honoured at the function.

Kanthalloor village was first brought in the ambit of the participatory tourism initiative 'PEPPER' before moving onto STREET project, with the active participation of the local community and the village panchayat.



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Seeking to enhance the rural experience for tourists, various areas were demarcated as green street, vegetable street, fruit street. All activities were coordinated by an oversight panel with the panchayat president as chairman and RT Mission coordinator as convener.

**Ends**