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PRESS RELEASE

Green protocol volunteers turn plastic arrest into a daily mission at Kanakakkunnu

Thiruvananthapuram, Aug. 27: At Kanakakkunnu, one of Thiruvananthapuram's most popular public spaces, a team of green protocol volunteers is quietly working to ensure that celebrations and public events do not leave behind a trail of plastic waste.

The Green Protocol initiative is part of the Tourism Department's efforts for the Onam celebrations, with 13 functional committees formed to oversee various aspects of the festivities, including a dedicated committee to enforce the Green Protocol.

The initiative, jointly implemented by the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and Suchitwa Mission, has been active at Kanakakkunnu since 2017. Its volunteers focus on preventing the use and careless disposal of single-use plastic while creating awareness among visitors.

Kerala is known for its cleanliness and its strong tradition of environmental responsibility, said Shri P.C. Vishnunadh, Minister for Tourism, Cinema and Culture.

"We strive to maintain these standards in everything we do, particularly at public spaces and during major celebrations such as Onam. Our Green Protocol initiatives are not merely about preventing plastic waste; they are about encouraging people to take responsibility for keeping our surroundings clean and sustainable. Through the efforts of our volunteers and the cooperation of the public, we can ensure that the spirit of Onam is reflected not only in our celebrations, but also in the way we care for our environment," the Minister added.

The volunteers conduct what they describe as a "plastic arrest" at the venue. Plastic carry bags brought into the premises are identified and marked with a sticker carrying a nominal penalty of Rs 10. The objective, however, is not merely to collect a penalty but to discourage people from throwing away plastic and gradually build a culture of responsible waste management.

The initiative has its roots in Kerala's Green Protocol movement, which made its debut during the 2015 National Games. Since then, the programme has expanded to cover public events and venues across the state.

At Kanakakkunnu, around 25 volunteers are deployed every day. They include NSS volunteers, MSW and BSW students, as well as school and college students. Through direct interaction with visitors, the volunteers sensitise the public about waste segregation, plastic reduction and responsible disposal.

As part of the ongoing Haritha Onam campaign, the volunteers have stepped up their awareness activities at Kanakakkunnu. A rally and flash mob were organised on Monday to spread the message of a plastic-free and environmentally responsible Onam.



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The response from visitors has been mixed, volunteers said. While the majority cooperate with the campaign, some react angrily when asked to surrender plastic carry bags or comply with the green protocol.

“Some people get angry when we stop them, but the majority cooperate. We are getting results because people are gradually becoming more aware,” said Anish Ansalam, a volunteer and MSW student involved in the initiative.

The campaign is also generating significant volumes of plastic waste for proper collection and management, with the volunteers dealing with around 250 pieces of plastic carry bags and other plastic items a day, according to the campaign team.

For the young volunteers, the exercise goes beyond enforcing a rule. Every interaction with a visitor is an opportunity to change a habit, and make environmentally responsible behaviour part of everyday life.

Ends