



**Department of Tourism**

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**Press Release**

**Kerala's Kanthalloor village bags Centre's 'Gold' for Best Rural Tourism project**



***Big endorsement for state's sustainable initiatives on World Tourism Day: Minister Riyas***

**Thiruvananthapuram, Sept 27:** Kanthalloor village panchayath in Kerala's Idukki district, where the sustainable and inclusive STREET tourism project of the State Responsible Tourism Mission was successfully implemented, has been bestowed with the 'Gold' award by the Government of India in the category of Best Rural Tourism Projects.

Kerala Tourism Director Shri P B Nooh received the award from the Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, India Smt. V Vidyavathi at a ceremony held today at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission (RTM) Coordinator and state Rural Tourism Nodal Officer Shri K RupeshKumar and Kanthalloor Village Panchayat President Shri P T Mohandas were also present to receive the honour.

STREET, which stands for "Sustainable, Tangible, Responsible, Experiential, Ethnic, Tourism", is implemented in selected places across Kerala, based on UNWTO's theme 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth'.

Kanthalloor was selected for the honour after an eight-month-long extensive evaluation of rural village projects in the length and breadth of the country. In all 767 projects from



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around the country vied for honours, and, five of them won 'Gold', 10 were selected for 'Silver' and 20 for 'Bronze.'

"This honour is a huge endorsement for Kerala's sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives led by the Responsible Tourism Mission," Kerala Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas said.

It is all the more heartening that this national honour is presented to Kerala on World Tourism Day, for which the theme chosen this year by United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is 'Tourism and Green Investments', Shri Riyas added.

Kerala is a global pioneer in sustainable and inclusive tourism development and Kanthalloor is a sterling example of how well tourism should be promoted based on these ideals, Tourism Secretary Shri K Biju said.

After receiving the honour, Shri P B Nooh recalled that this is the latest in a series of international and national awards to be bestowed on Kerala's RT initiative, which has set a globally-appreciated model of tourism development that protects ecology, values culture and brings benefits to the local community.

Located close to the famed hill station Munnar in Idukki district, 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.

Recalling the phase-by-phase process followed in Kanthalloor, Shri Rupesh said, to start with, dedicated tourism village assemblies were held in all wards of the panchayat to discuss the schemes to be taken up. This was followed by activities such as resource mapping, training programmes and formation of MSMEs relating to range of tourism-related businesses and services.

After laying a firm foundation, the RT Mission and the Village Panchayat successfully took the project forward with clear-cut planning. The entire panchayat was declared as part of a 'tourism circuit'.

Kathalloor 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.

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



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Based on the protocol for village and farm tourism, various tourism packages were drawn up and implemented in Kanthalloor. Arrangements were made for panchayat-level registration of vehicles used for tourism activities.

Uniform rates were decided for tour packages and review meetings were held jointly by RT Mission and UN Women. As part of this, 'safe destination' scheme was implemented.

'Green Badges' were provided to vehicles used for tourism activities.

A range of other activities like proper maintenance of street lights, installation of public water vending machines and destination sign boards were done. Collection of waste from houses and tourism properties were systematised. Green check posts were set up to strictly implement ban on plastic material.

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**