



Drum concert in Kerala Tourism's online Onam a big hit; Sadya video a visual treat

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Four days ahead of Onam, the Kerala government served a colourful presentation of the elaborate feast integral to the harvest festival on Friday, setting an example of safe celebration of happy occasions amid the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A video released by Kerala Tourism on its Facebook channel displayed the culinary richness of the coastal state which is abuzz with the annual preparations for Onam, this time on August 31.

The 18-minute audiovisual treat explains the variety in the taste and material of the delicacies in the multi-course vegetarian lunch, called 'Sadya' in the state's Malayalam language.

The video is part of an ongoing two-week-long virtual endeavour saluting the spirit of Onam. The run-up to the harvest festival, too, has its traditional significance, chiefly marked by the ten days of laying of the flower-carpet that symbolically welcomes the mythological Mahabali whose rule was marked by the prosperity of his subjects.

The Tourism Department's August 22-September 2 "Onam Fest Kerala" features a bouquet of heritage arts and celebratory rituals alongside new-age cultural programmes—all of it online. It garnered 3 million views by Friday morning. Of the events beamed so far, the Panchari Melam ensemble alone earned as many as one million eyeballs.

Coming up, on the day of Onam (Monday) is a Kathakali show, followed by a live band performance and an Onam theme film the subsequent days. This weekend will host Family Onam Celebrations (Saturday) and Job Kurian's music show (Sunday). All programmes are at 7 pm.

The 'Sadya' banquet was up on social media on Thursday afternoon, with a row of people in ethnic Kerala dress sitting cross-legged on floor-mats and eating with the hand an array of dishes for the rice served on banana leaves. The classical value of different types of curries, fried vegetables, rounded pappadams, pickles, chutneys and two courses of payasam desserts came to the fore with the anchor explaining (in English) the order and manner of serving each dish, besides a brief on their ingredients and recipe.



Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran said the online festival showcases performances that unveil the legends of Onam and the values it upholds over centuries. The coronavirus pandemic may have muted the celebrations, but not the spirit of Onam as a festival of hope, harmony and love, he said in a message.

"The Government of Kerala has made arrangements to celebrate the festival, following COVID protocols. Extra safety precautions will be taken and there won't be celebrations in public places," he added, greeting the people.

Rani George, Secretary, Kerala Tourism, said 'Onam Fest Kerala' is in tune with a new world order that continues to maintain social distancing to curtail the spread of the disease. "Kerala Tourism is creating an opportunity for travellers across the world to experience our culture and heritage through the social media."

P Bala Kiran, Director, Kerala Tourism, said the online festival has provided the rest of the states with a model for traditional cultural events amid COVID-19.



The festival began on August 22 with a Panchari Melam session featuring Kerala's ethnic Chenda, drums, Cymbals, horns and pipes. This was followed by the Kerala Natanam dance (August 23), Onam folk songs (August 24), Pulikali- tiger dance (August 25) and Onapottan folk character and Sadya (August 27). On August 28 evening brought to viewers multi-instrumentalist Tao Issaro's Onam songs.

Amid isolation, Onam "brings us the perfect way to go across borders and share joy and togetherness with friends and family all over the world", Kerala Tourism Facebook page said.