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

Thrissur, August 29, 2020

Four days ahead of Onam, the Kerala government served a colourful portrayal of the Tomorrow Beat 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 all set to usher in the annual festival this time on August 31.

The 18-minute audiovisual treat explains the variety in taste and material of the delicacies in the multi-course vegetarian lunch, known as Sadhya in the state Malayalam language.

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

The Tourism Department’s August 22-September 2 “Onam Fest Kerala” features a bouquet of heritage arts and contemporary situations alongside new-age cultural programmes—all of it online. It garnered 3 million views by Friday morning. Of the events beamed so far, the Padippoplayeru 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 Famous Onam Celebrations (Saturday) and Anjali Childrens music show (Sunday). All programmes are at 7 pm.

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

Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran said the online festival showcases performances that unveil the legends of Onam and the valley it uplifts over centuries. The coronavirus pandemic may have halted 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 norms. Extra safety precautions will be taken and there won’t be celebrations in public places,” he added, greeting the people.

Rajiv Gopi, 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 travelers across the world to experience our culture and heritage through the social media.”

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 Panchami Melam session featuring Keralites ethnic Chenda, drums, Cymbals, horns and pipe. This was followed by the Kerala Natyanjali Dance (August 23), Onam folk songs (August 24), Pulkali tiger dance (August 25) and Dropdown folk character and Sadya (August 27). On August 28 evening brought to viewers multi-instrumentalist Tanissu’s Onam songs.

Amita Islaam, 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.