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Houseboats to be converted into Covid-19 isolation rooms

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EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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THE health department and district administration have made all arrangements to convert around 2,000 rooms of houseboats here into isolation rooms, in the event of a Covid-19 emergency. According to Public Works Minister G Sudhakaran, the government and district administration has made all necessary arrangements in this regard.

“We have held discussions with houseboat owners and they agreed to the proposal. During the 2018 flood, the houseboat owners had extended wholehearted support by joining in the rescue and relief operations. They are offering similar support now during the pandemic,” the minister said.



There are around 800 registered boats in the district. We are planning to conduct awareness classes to boat workers to allay their fears on dealing with suspected Covid patients

T G Abhilash Kumar, Deputy Director, tourism department

Kevin Rozario, secretary, All Kerala Houseboat Owners and Operators' Samithi, said, “When the world is facing a pandemic we should support the government's efforts. Already, a letter has been dispatched to the chief minister, indicating our willingness to hand over the houseboats so they can be turned into isolation rooms. It is our duty to provide maximum help to the government. Over 65 houseboat owners are members of

our association and we can provide at least 300 rooms.”

A Anaz, secretary, Alappuzha House Boat Owners' Samithi, said, “The houseboats anchored at Punnamada Finishing Point and Dock Chira can be converted,” he said.

District Collector M Anjana said all steps have been taken to convert the houseboats into isolation facilities. “We are mainly focusing on the Finishing Point as the major centre, as there is ample space there to moor sufficient number of houseboats. Plus, buildings are available in the area for other activities,” she said.

T G Abhilash Kumar, Deputy Director, tourism department, said, “We have discussed the idea with five associations representing houseboat owners in Alappuzha and all of them are game.”