Kerala Tourism aims to bring value addition to Champions Boat League

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BUOYED by the flawless organisation of the first international Champions Boat League in the backwaters of the state, which brought a global appeal to the village sport of ‘vallam-kali’, Kerala Tourism is looking at ways to experiment with the two-month Indian Premier League (IPL)-model regatta by giving value addition to it and bringing in professionalism into the conduct of the event.

According to official data, as many as 18.5 million people across the globe watched the live broadcasting of the regatta through as many as eight channels. Further, around 22 lakh people, including domestic and foreign tourists, watched the event at various venues scattered across the state.

According to Tourism director P Balakiran, some of the competitions were witnessed by as many as two lakh people at different venues. Even many of the celebrated IPL or ISL matches couldn’t muster this much of people to a single venue.

“It shows that the Champions Boat League has a bright future and we can bring global attention to this event if properly branded and marketed. In order to take this event forward, the state has now formed a company titled Champs Boat League with Finance Minister Thomas Isaac as one of the additional directors. We are also planning to give more value addition to this event like introducing events like dragon boat race prior to the event to attract more tourists,” he said.

Another senior officer, who was part of the conduct of the event, said in the past, many of the snake boat races held often end up with skirmishes as each competition was an opportunity for one region to settle old scores.

But this time, since the event was organised with a global appeal, all those things became a thing of the past. Further, as the prize money was fixed around ₹5.9 crore, the oarsmen comprising around 150 in each snake boat offered a good return for their effort as well as bringing in professionalism.

“The event was organised at a cost of Rs 20 crore. In the first edition, we could attract only around 20 per cent of sponsorship for the conduct of the event and we aim to raise it to 50 per cent in the second edition which would allow the department to reduce spending the public money. Moreover, since it was the opening edition, the industry did not actively participate. Now, the successful launching of the first edition ensures the involvement of the hospitality industry and corporate companies in the next editions,” he added.