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PRESS RELEASE

Champions' Boat League: National corporates and celebrities likely to bid for franchisee rights

- **Kerala Tourism invites bids for franchisee rights of 9 teams; July 25 last date for bidding**

Kochi, July 24: A clutch of Indian corporates and well-known celebrities having interest in national sports leagues are in active discussions for franchisee acquisitions of Kerala Tourism's inaugural Champions Boat League (CBL), the country's first-ever water-based sports league patterned on the IPL format of cricket.

July 25 (Thursday) is the last date for bidding for CBL, a Kerala Tourism-sponsored nine-team boating race event. The interested parties can share their Expression of Interest on franchisee@championsboatleague.in. Franchisee team ownerships will be finalized and announced at an auction ceremony at Grand Hyatt in Kochi on July 29.

Franchisees are to benefit through sponsorships and TV and digital rights. All the benefits from the sponsorship, venue, ticket collection, TV and digital rights and merchandising will be shared with them.

"The expected participation of national corporates and celebrities in the CBL's bidding process will give a huge impetus to Kerala's famous but largely scattered snake boat races by professionalizing and commercializing the event on the lines of IPL," Tourism Minister ShriKadakampallySurendran said today.

Significantly, it can be the tipping point in glamourising monsoon tourism in Kerala by adding an enchanting product for tourists during the lean months from June to late October and thus making the state a 365-day destination, he pointed out.

"It will be a win-win situation for all the stakeholders, be it a franchisee owner, a boat owner/club or an oarsman. Tourists will also benefit as they will be treated to the enchanting spectacle of boat races in Kerala's famous scenic backwaters," said Finance Minister Shri Thomas Isaac.

Staggered over nearly three months, the high-stakes popular mass event will witness nine teams participating in 12 races across 12 locations on 12 weekends, from August 10 until November 01. For a smooth conduct of the sporting extravaganza, Kerala Tourism has formed a government-owned private limited company. An agency consortium led by E factor Entertainment and The Social Street has been selected as consultants.



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Tourism Secretary Smt Rani George said CBL is a unique product developed by Kerala Tourism with twin objectives: create a new visual experience for the visitors from August to October and also benefit the local community through the league boat races. Kerala Tourism is structuring the league without compromising on the social aspects and local involvement in the boat races.

Kerala Tourism has tried with events like 'Splash' to promote 'Mud Football'; it has also romanticised the houseboat during monsoon and taken up events like Nishagandhi Monsoon Raga Festival.

"Still, these are standalone events. CBL can dramatically change this scenario. Every weekend any tourist, who comes to Kerala, will be able to witness one 'Champions Boat Race' in any location of the backwaters. It will make a world class experience for tourists besides positioning Kerala more firmly in the world tourism map," Smt George said.

Significantly, it will introduce standardization, commercialization, professionalism and fan loyalty in Kerala's scattered snake boat races, she pointed out.

Tourism Director Shri P BalaKiran said the Nehru Trophy boat race is viewed by more than four lakh people directly. "The Eden Gardens stadium can only seat 60,000 people and the Melbourne Cricket Ground around 90,000 people. I think this is one of the largest sporting spectacles vis-à-vis the live audience and also the huge televised audience which IPL does with. We want to magnify it, commercialize it and telewire it for a global audience." The nine teams or Boat Clubs for which bids have to be made are Pallathuruthi Boat Club; Police Boat Club; United Boat Club, Kuttamangalam, Kainakary; NCDC/Kumarakam; Village Boat Club, Edathua; KBC/SFBC, Kumarakam; Vembanad Boat Club, Kumarakam; Town Boat Club, Kumarakam; and Brothers Boat Club, Edathua.

The boat league will begin on August 10 with Nehru Trophy Boat Race on Punnamada Lake (Alappuzha) and end with the President's Trophy Boat Race in Kollam on the state's Formation Day (November 1). The other races during the intervening weekends are: Pulinkunnu, Alappuzha (Aug 17), Thazhathangadi, Kottayam (Aug 24), Piravam, Ernakulam (Aug 31), Marine Drive, Ernakulam (Sept 7), Kottappuram, Thrissur (Sept 21), Ponnani, Malappuram (Sept 28), Kainakari, Alappuzha (Oct 5), Karuvatta, Alappuzha (Oct 12), Kayamkulam, Alappuzha (Oct 19), Kallada, Kollam (Oct 26).

All races will be held in the afternoons: between 2.30 pm and 5 pm. The CBL winner will get a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, while those finishing second and third receive Rs 15 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, respectively.

Tickets for the boat races can be booked online through 'Book my Show' platform.