



Department of Tourism

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: info@keralatourism.org

marketing@keralatourism.org

www.keralatourism.org

PRESS RELEASE

Kerala tourism turns disabled and elderly friendly



- *Kerala, the first state to implement UNWTO's 'Tourism for All'*
- *Kerala Tourism enters into a long-term Cultural Exchange Programme with Manchester City, UK*

Thiruvananthapuram, March 4 – Kerala Tourism today launched the first phase of its ambitious Barrier-free Kerala tourism project, making 70 destinations across the state disabled and elderly friendly, becoming the first state in India to implement UN World Tourism Organisation's call for "Tourism for All."

Inaugurating Phase One of the project, the Hon'ble Minister for Cooperation, Tourism and Devaswom Shri Kadakampally Surendran said, "Our objective is to make all tourism centres accessible to the differently empowered by 2021. Special tour packages for differently empowered tourists, both domestic and foreign, are being planned together with Responsible Tourism Mission."

Kerala has become the first state in India to implement UN World Tourism Organisation's call for "Tourism for All – Promoting Universal Accessibility" in 2016, the Minister added. He also released the logo of the Barrier-free Kerala project in the presence of differently empowered persons.

Of the 120 centres envisaged in Phase One, 70 centres have been equipped for the differently empowered with accessible ramps, special toilets, wheelchairs, walking sticks, folding walkers, crutches, special signages, tactile walkways, touch screen kiosks, Braille brochures, audio guides, to name some. The outlay for the project is Rs 9 crore.



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Presiding over the event, Tourism Secretary Smt Rani George said, "In foreign countries, we see the differently empowered people visit and experience tourist centres all by themselves, without any help or assistance."

"Tourism centres in Kerala, which is implementing innovative projects such as 'Human by Nature', should also grow to that level," she added even while calling for the participation of private entrepreneurs to make all centres in the state barrier-free.

Tourism Director Shri P Bala Kiran said that all tourism projects henceforth would be made barrier-free. In accordance with 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016', 261 ramps, 116 toilets, 163 wheelchairs, 170 walking sticks, 958 signages and 159 crutches have been provided in various centres thus far.

The event also saw Kerala Tourism enter into a long-term Cultural Exchange Programme with Manchester city in UK. The official letter authenticating the Exchange Programme was handed over to the Minister by Shri Wilson Mathews, Former President, Manchester Malayali Association.

Three artists from Kerala will participate in Manchester Day Parade, one of UK's major pageantries. The expenses of the artists participating in the pageantry will be borne by Manchester City Provincial Art Council.

Shri KG Mohanlal, CMD, Kerala Tourism Infrastructure Limited; Shri Anish Kumar, MD, Travel Planners, Shri PP Pramod, Director, Ecotourism; Shri KV Ravishankar, Tourism Advisory Board Member; Shri K Rupesh Kumar, State Coordinator, Responsible Tourism Mission and Shri Nandakumar, Joint Director, Tourism spoke on the occasion.

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