



**Department of Tourism**

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**Press Release**

**Kochi becomes India's first city to get membership of Beijing-based WTFCF**

**Kochi, Aug 10:** Kochi has become the first city in India to be a member of Beijing-headquartered World Tourism Cities Federation (WTFCF) Council with the Kerala Tourism Department accepting the Council's invitation to join its league of leading tourism cities across the world.

Kochi Mayor Shri Tony Chammany handed over the membership acceptance document to Chinese Ambassador to India Mr Le Yucheng at a function held here today in the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Oommen Chandy, Chief Secretary Jiji Thomson, Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao and Tourism Director P I Sheik Pareeth.

State Principal Secretary for IT and Industries Shri P H Kurian and Former Secretary T Balakrishnan also attended the function.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Yucheng said that the two regions need to explore the possibilities for partnerships in culture, sports and tourism as there are many striking similarities between the cultures of China and Kerala like the cuisine, martial arts and snake and dragon boat races.

The Chinese Ambassador also expressed interest in bringing investment from China to Kerala's tourism sector especially for construction of an entertainment city and an oceanarium.

He also urged the government to convene a meeting of tour operators of both the countries while agreeing to support Kerala's efforts to increase inflow of Chinese tourists to the state. He also responded positively to Kerala's request to facilitate Chartered Flights from China to Kerala. Shri Oommen Chandy said that the state government will send a detailed proposal to Beijing on various investment possibilities in Kerala including in the tourism sector.

Shri Jiji Thomson said that the city's membership of WTFCF, which has 135 members world over, is a new milestone for the Kerala Government and the Tourism Department. The new partnership offers tremendous growth opportunities to Kerala's tourism sector.

Shri Kamala Vardhana Rao said that the membership will enable the state to explore new tourism markets abroad. Shri Sheik Pareeth noted that the invitation is a big endorsement for Kerala Tourism and recognition to the state government's efforts to reach out to global tourism sector.

The government sought Mr Yucheng support to bring in Chinese film production companies to India, especially to Kerala, given the state's scenic locations, good connectivity and hotel room density. It also raised the issue of lack of Chinese language guides in Kerala and also suggested possible cooperation in training Indian guides in Chinese language.



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WTCF is a non-profit, non-governmental international organization voluntarily formed by tourism cities and organizations of various countries and regions from around the world. The WTCF was founded in Beijing on September 15, 2012, and is the first international tourism organization to focus on cities in the world.

A delegation led by Hon'ble Minister for Tourism Shri A P Anil Kumar and the Chief Secretary had participated in the recently concluded Beijing International Tourism Expo. The Tourism Department had also conducted a roadshow in Shanghai which was attended by 70 buyers from the Chinese travel and tourism industry. The delegation-led by Shri Kamala Vardhana Rao, had held a B2B meet with the tour operators and travel agents at Shanghai on the occasion.