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AFTER a lukewarm 2019, stakeholders are expecting a boost to Kochi's tourism prospects in 2020, thanks to the several projects and events that will be commissioned and organised, respectively, in the coming year.

The foundation for the growth of Kochi's tourism sector has already been laid with Lonely Planet - considered the Bible of travellers - ranking Kochi seventh in the list of top 10 cities to visit in 2020. Similarly, Nat Geo Traveller has included Fort

Kochi in its 25 top tourist destinations to explore in 2020.

The fifth edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale, scheduled to be held from December 2020, is also expected to attract tourists to Kochi. The commissioning of the dedicated cruise terminal at Ernakulam wharf will bolster cruise tourism sector in the district.

"The year 2020 comes with a lot of expectations for Kochi's tourism sector. The Lonely Planet and Nat Geo rankings, along with the Biennale, will attract foreign and domestic tourists to

■ Biennale to attract tourists from across the globe to Kochi

■ New dedicated cruise terminal to help cruise tourism to grow

■ Kochi's inclusion in must-visit destinations list published by travel magazines to attract foreign tourists

Kochi. If the current political unrest simmers down and other countries withdraw their travel directives, the year will certainly boost tourist footfall in Kochi," said Paulose Mathew, chairman, Travel Agents Federation of In-

dia (TAFI), Kerala chapter. Cruise tourism in Kochi has been growing with each passing year. According to the schedule, 53 cruise-liners were expected to anchor in Kochi in 2020, same as last year. However, the commissioning of the ₹25.72-crore dedicated cruise terminal in February 2020 will allow larger cruise vessels to dock at the Cochin Port. At present, the BTP berth of Cochin Port can accommodate only 260m-long ships.

K Rajkumar, Joint Director, Kerala Tourism, Ernakulam, said hotels and tourist destina-

tions have been receiving good response from tourists since December. "It is expected the trend will continue in 2020. We are expecting more cruise vessels in 2020. As for infrastructure development, pending projects like renovation of historical Chinese nets and Fort Kochi walkway can be completed in six months. All tourism stakeholders in Kochi have high expectations with the coming year," he said.

As many as 3.68 lakh foreign tourists and 28.79 lakh domestic tourists visited Kochi till September 30.