Press Release

SAARC nations to participate in Kerala Tourism’s Crafts Festival

Thiruvananthapuram, Sept 19: An array of ethnic items and artists from the SAARC nations will feature at an International Handicrafts Exhibition in Malabar this year-end as a run-up to the ninth edition of the Grand Kerala Shopping Festival (GKSF).

Expert artisans from all the eight nations of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will thus participate in the 18-day mela to be held at Iringal in Kozhikode district from December 20 as part of the Mega Season 9 of GKSF which is being hosted by the Kerala Tourism Department.

The External Affairs Ministry will bring in the artists from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan to the Sargaalaya Iringal International Crafts Festival which will have the participation of the United Nations as well, Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao said. The proposal was cemented at a meeting Shri Rao and GKSF Director Shri K.M. Anil Muhammed had with Mr Gopal Bagle, Joint Secretary to the External Affairs Ministry, in the national capital on Friday.

"We have discussed the matter also with Vinod Zutshi, Secretary to the Union Tourism Ministry,” Shri Rao said.

Further, efforts are on under the leadership of Kerala Tourism Minister Shri A P Anilkumar and Shri Shashi Tharoor, MP, to bring in more foreign countries to the December 20-January 5 crafts festival. The 2011-founded Sargaalaya is a pioneering Kerala Tourism enterprise being managed by an eight-decade-old construction society in a 20-acre campus near Vadakara, employing 90 artists housed in the 27 huts where they churn up 60-plus varieties of pan-Indian crafts.

GKSF is an annual shopping event which Kerala Tourism conducts in co-ordination with the state’s departments of Industries & Commerce, Finance and Local Self Government with the aim of transforming God’s Own Country into a hub for international shopping experience and help upgrade its traditional marketing infrastructure.

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