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Press Release

Shaolin Meets 'Kalaripayattu' From 'God's Own Country'

Kerala Tourism Woos China with Kalari-Shaolin fusion and Kathakali in Beijing

Thiruvananthapuram, June 26: Shaolin Kung Fu has found a welcome partner in 'Kalaripayattu', the classical martial arts form from 'God's Own Country'.

Six performers of 'Kalaripayattu' joined hands with Shaolin exponents at a rare fusion of the two traditional art forms in the Chinese capital on Friday. The occasion was a 'Kerala Evening' organised at the Indian Embassy in Beijing by Kerala Tourism, which is making its foray into China, a vast market with 107 million Chinese tourists travelling worldwide, according to figures available for 2014.

A shared cultural heritage was the theme as Shaolin exponents effortlessly mingled with Kalaripayattu performers in a scintillating display of martial arts. Two Kathakali artists from Kerala then went on to enthral an audience, which had the Who's Who of Chinese travel and tourism industry.

"The breathtaking fusion of 'Kalaripayattu' and Shaolin showed that Kerala and China have a lot in common," said Kerala Tourism Minister Shri A P Anilkumar, who is leading a high-level state delegation to China.

"Like Kerala, China has a rich tradition of classical art forms such as the famous Dragon dance, making it easy for us to understand the country and its culture and also for the people of China to understand our culture," said Shri Anilkumar.

"Relations between the people of China and Kerala go back to centuries ago when traders from China and Kerala exchanged commodities like spices and silk," the Minister said, adding that China and Kerala shared several cultural traditions like martial arts, ancient medicinal systems and even kitchen utensils.

"Kerala is a tiny state of India, but it is blessed with a rich geographical and cultural diversity," said Kerala Chief Secretary Shri Jiji Thomson, who is part of the state delegation. "With an easy connectivity and ideal proximity, Kerala is a natural destination for visitors from China," he added.

"The first thing that tourists from worldwide see on our famous backwaters in Kerala is the Chinese fishing net along its coast. The most important thing in a kitchen in Kerala is the Chinese frying pan," Shri Thomson said referring to the cultural similarities between China and Kerala.

Senior Chinese journalists, corporate executives, airline industry officials and tour operators were part of a select audience at the 'Kerala Evening' hosted by Kerala Tourism and the Indian Embassy. Indian Ambassador to China, Shri Ashok K Kantha, was present on the occasion along with the Kerala Chief Secretary and Kerala Tourism Secretary G Kamala Vardhana Rao. A highlight of the occasion was a presentation on Kerala's destinations by Shri Rao.

Buoyed by the enthusiastic response to the martial arts fusion and Kathakali performance, Kerala



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Tourism will organise a repeat show of the two performances for the general public at the Indian Embassy on Saturday.

A similar show will also be organised on Saturday at the venue of the Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE) 2015, which began on Friday. 'Kalaripayattu' and backwaters is the theme of the Kerala Tourism pavillion at BITE 2015. It is for the first time that Kerala Tourism is participating in the three-day BITE, the premier travel and tourism fair in Asia.

Kerala Tourism and its industry partners from the state will also participate in a road show in Shanghai on June 30. It will be the first road show ever by Kerala Tourism in China.

The visit by the Kerala Tourism delegation comes close on the heels of the three-day state visit to China by Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi in May, during which he announced Visa on Arrival for tourists from China.

Known for its beautiful backwaters, pristine beaches, majestic hills and a calm countryside, Kerala took the first step towards rolling down the red carpet for the people of China, the most travelled in the world today, with the participation of the Tourism Department of Kerala in BITE 2015.

Kerala's backwaters, which tell a unique tale of geographic, social, economic and cultural integration of the state, is one of the most important destinations in the world. The backwaters was once voted ahead of the historic Taj Mahal, as the top tourism destination in India in a survey.

Kerala's renowned ancient medicinal system of Ayurveda is expected to be a huge attraction for Chinese visitors along with a variety of tourism destinations and products spanning a whole spectrum of cultural and social milieu.

China and Kerala are also known for the ancient trade routes, the Spice Route, and the Silk Route, linking both with the rest of the world.

"Kerala offers everything a modern day Chinese traveller aspires for," said Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao. "We have heritage destinations like Fort Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Bekal, backwater locations like Kochi, Alappuzha and Kollam, hill towns like Munnar, Wagamon and Thekkady, calm beaches like Kovalam, Varkala and Poovar," Shri Rao added.

The Great Backwaters of Kerala is considered a once-in-a-lifetime experience like the Great Barrier Reef and the Grand Canyon.

China is a key market for Kerala Tourism as the Asian neighbour is credited with the highest number of outbound tourists in the world. Most of the tourists from China prefer Asian holiday destinations.

There has been an increase of 33.44% of Chinese tourist inflow to Kerala in 2014 compared to the previous year.

As many as nine private trade partners of Kerala Tourism are taking part in BITE 2015. The participation of Kerala Tourism in BITE 2015, attended by travel trade executives from around the world, and the road



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show in Shanghai are expected to bring the trade and industry in China close to their counterparts in Kerala.

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