Stakeholders call for unlocking tourism

Vital for recovery of industry

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With over half-a-dozen key States opening up the tourism sector based on Unlock 4, stakeholders of the travel and tourism industry in the State have demanded resuming operations in the sector that has been remaining closed for six months.

They have officially raised the demand to the government to keep “Kerala open for tourism” and allow them to carry out business by adopting COVID-19 protective measures on the lines of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Goa, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan to accelerate survival and recovery of the sector.

The existing 14-day quarantine, a requirement for travellers arriving in the State, is a major setback for the travel trade. The government has given permission to open hotels in the State subject to the COVID-19 prevention and control rules, but it will benefit only those visiting the State for up to seven days on business.

Only a very few hotels in major cities are open. Most have no guests as hotels, restaurants and houseboats in the State are run exclusively for leisure tourists. Lack of business has affected more than 15 lakh workers directly and 20 lakh indirectly.

More than 4,000 hotels, resorts, 1,000-odd houseboats, 100 Ayurvedic centres, 1,000 tour operators, homestay owners, water theme parks, taxi drivers, tourists guides, and units in the adventure tourism sector are affected. “If this continues, the tourism industry will have to be closed down permanently,” says Confederation of Kerala Tourism Industry (CKTI) president E.M. Najeeb and general secretary Sajeev Kurup.

“Let us accept the situation and open up the sector with adequate safeguards. If we open up in October, we will get 20% to 30% business in the remaining months,” Abraham George, member, National Tourism Advisory Council, said.

Letter to CM

“This is the time when tour operators from different States start marketing for Diwali and also the time when foreign tour operators start planning for January 2021. The government should immediately announce that Kerala is open for tourism,” Thomas John Mutheet, chairman, CII Kerala State Council, said in a letter to the Chief Minister.