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## TOURISM DEPT EASES CLASSIFICATION SCHEME FOR HOMESTAYS IN STATE

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### TOURISM DEPT EASES CLASSIFICATION SCHEME FOR HOMESTAYS IN STATE

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TO promote the homestay industry in Kerala, the state tourism department has introduced amendments in its classification scheme. The amendments include a reduction in registration fee and the number of mandatory facilities for starting homestays.

The homestays are classified into Diamond, Gold and Silver categories. The changes proposed by the tourism department in the Homestay Classification/Reclassification Scheme was approved by the government last week. The new scheme has slashed the classification and reclassification fees to ₹3,000.

Earlier, the classification fee for Diamond category homestays was ₹5,500 and reclassification fee ₹4,000. For the Gold homestays, the classification fee was ₹4,000 and ₹3,000 for reclassification. For Silver homestays, the classification fee was ₹2,500 and ₹2,000 for reclassification.



Changes in scheme

- State government approves tourism department's amendments in the classification scheme
- A unified registration fee of ₹3,000 fixed for all categories of homestays
- Inspection fee of ₹2,000 omitted
- Number of facilities included in the checklist for providing classification reduced from 90 to 69
- Homestays classified into Diamond, Gold and Silver categories
- Classification provided for 3 years
- 5,000 is the number of homestays in Kerala

#### Fewer mandatory facilities

Apart from it, mandatory and desirable facilities at homestays also have been cut short in the updated scheme. Earlier, the classification was based on 90 facilities available at the homestay.

This was cut short to 69 in newly released checklist. Some of the mandatory requirements like the ability to communicate in a foreign language other than English by one member of the family; location of homestay inside three-kilometre proximity of the tourism destination; certificate training on food safety, entrepreneurship, tourism and hospitality; percentage of women to be employed in homestays; biogas plants; and cultivation of fruits and vegetables at homestays have been omitted now.

The Kerala Homestay and Tourism Society (Kerala Hats) welcomed the tourism department's amendments in the scheme for homestays. "Homestays are preferred by tourists

who like to explore the local life and village destinations in the state. As most of these homestays are located in interior locations, tourists, especially foreigners, prefer them these days," Kerala Hats chairman M P Sivadathan said.

#### LSGDs' stand questioned

However, homestay owners have raised concerns about the stand of local self-government bodies (LSGDs) which seem to be against homestays. Even a complaint was filed with the tourism minister in this regard.

"When the tourism department is asking people to start homestays, the LSGDs seem to be against the concept. If we approach an LSGD for an NoC, they classify our house in the commercial category, after which the electricity and water tariff will be charged at commercial rates. During off-season, we have to pay commercial tariffs for living in our own house. Besides, we have to bribe LSGD officials to get the certificate," Sivadathan said.

