

THE HINDU

Tourism industry yet to come out of the blues

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Insistence on COVID-19 negative certificates and other restrictions proving huge hurdle to revival, say stakeholders

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Though the tourism sector has been fully opened and Kerala Tourism has been organising promotion campaigns to increase tourist footfall, restrictions imposed in line with the COVID-19 protocol continue to be a hurdle to the industry's revival.

Insistence on COVID-19 negative certificate for tourists from outside the State and RT-PCR test 48 hours prior to their arrival or upon arrival has been cited as a major impediment to stepping up tourist inflow. Besides, 12 States are insisting on the negative certificate on the basis of the RT-PCR test

There is no business and hotels and resorts have been deserted this month

ANISH KUMAR P. K.
A tour operator

from those returning from Kerala.

Footing the bill

The latest setback for the tourism industry after opening up in October last has come after domestic tourists started trickling in by January and February this year. "There is no business and hotels and resorts have been deserted this month. Many running hotels, resorts and travel agencies are wondering how to foot the salary bill



Awaiting brighter days: New curbs are imposed at a time when Kerala Tourism is taking part in national tourism fairs.

of staff who were recalled," says Anish Kumar P. K. of a leading city-based tour agency.

For many, payment of building and property tax,

vehicle insurance and repayment of loans are turning to be liabilities. Some are even mulling closing down units.

Restrictions on domestic tourists arriving in the State

and those returning have been painting a negative image about the State.

The curbs had been imposed at a time when Kerala Tourism is participating in national tourism fairs such as SATTE Delhi, OTM Delhi and TTF Ahmedabad by spending ₹1.32 crore. It is also currently hosting the online campaign 'My First Trip' under Kerala Blog Express.

Industry stakeholders are of the opinion that there is "no logic" in imposing the restrictions as COVID-19 cases have been on the decline since last October.

E.M. Najeeb, chairperson of the Confederation of Kerala Tourism Industry, says stakeholders of the industry,

which generated ₹48,000 crore during 2019-20, cannot accept the Health Department's rationale for disallowing easy travel.

Revenue loss

The estimated loss is approximately ₹32,000 crore for 2020-21. Unless the tourism industry is allowed to function in full swing soon, they say even 50% of the revenue target for 2021-22 cannot be achieved.

The stakeholders are also demanding hassle-free travel in the State for COVID-vaccinated persons, reduction in the cost of COVID tests and vaccination of all persons working in the hospitality sector on priority.