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SWAGAT

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE FEDERATION OF KERALA HOTELS ASSOCIATION

BI-LINGUAL BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION



COVER STORY

SOULFUL AYURVEDA REJUVENATION

മാലിന്യമുക്ത കേരളം സുറിസം
മേഖലയ്ക്ക് മുതൽക്കൂട്ടാകും

തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി
എം.ബി. രാജേഷ്

വെള്ളാർ ആർട്സ് & ക്രാഫ്റ്റ്സ് വില്ലേജ്
കലകളുടെ സാമ്പർണശോഭ

AYODHYA:
CITY OF SPIRITUAL GRANDEUR



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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE FEDERATION OF KERALA HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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Attitudes, policies must change

Hospitality is the heart and soul of tourism, but we in the hotel industry in Kerala are faced with a situation that can only be termed ironic. The hospitality sector in the country as a whole is back with a bang after the debilitating blow dealt by the Covid-19 pandemic but, in Kerala, the industry is struggling for survival. This anachronistic situation is the result of the liquor-related policies of successive State governments and the completely unrealistic social attitudes nurtured over time by some vested interests.

It is fashionable for some in Kerala to speak against sale of liquor. They can do so because liquor sale and consumption happen in the visible space—at retail outlets, bars and, nowadays, homes. When a social process is visible, it is easy to legislate to control the entire activity. But what about what happens beyond the visible space, like the tentacles of drug mafia that has the younger generation in its fatal grip all over Kerala? Pious statements and repeated campaigns have yielded little on that front while the hotel industry has been dealt blows after blows, leaving hundreds of them gasping for breath.

There seems to be none around to speak reason to the government. Those in decision-making positions forget that survival of hotels with 3-Star and 4-Star classification is heavily dependent on provision of alcoholic beverages to the patrons. Tourists and those who reach the State to attend MICE events and destination weddings cannot do without liquor. How can the hotel industry meet their needs paying hefty taxes and suffering stern restrictions on running the business?

Kerala is the only State in India that still retains Turnover Tax (ToT) after GST rollout. ToT is not applicable to liquor manufacturers anywhere in the country, but hotels in Kerala are still being asked to pay ToT. Every hotel owner must file monthly and annual returns, make monthly remittances and suffer assessments and re-assessments if they are to run the business. Notices are issued at random and there are several court cases pending against many. To top it all, the hotels must also suffer the highhandedness of officials and their unjust demands.

The Federation of Kerala Hotels Association (FKHA) has submitted a proposal for collection of ToT at the first

purchase point so that the government would get the anticipated revenue up front. This would free both the bar owners from red tape and bottlenecks being created by the officials in the name of tax mobilization. Opposition to switchover to collection of ToT at the first point of purchase has come mainly from GST (Sales Tax) officials. Our plea is that the government, which has succeeded in bringing about transparency in governance at various levels, should do the same in the case of bar hotels.

Another key issue has to do with bar timings. Bar hotels are now allowed to function only from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Earlier, bars functioned from 8 a.m. to 12 midnight. In most neighbouring States, bars function till 1 a.m. Needless to say, the stipulation that bars must close by 11 p.m. runs counter to the State government's commitment to promote night life across the State and give a fillip to the tourism and IT sectors, which are booming in the State. The right thing to do is to extend bar timings to 12 midnight in municipal and corporation areas and in tourist destinations. Bar opening time should also be synchronized with that of liquor outlets which open at 10 a.m.

Destination weddings are becoming a big draw in Kerala, generating thousands of new jobs. Newly-weds and their relatives nowadays come from North India and abroad. North Indian marriage ceremonies would go on till late into the night. Liquor is naturally an essential part of their celebrations. But, given the current restrictions, liquor cannot be served to them beyond 11 p.m. Foreigners too have been complaining about non-availability of liquor after 11 p.m. There is also serious need for a rethink on observance of Dry Day on the first day of every month because this hurts both the hotel business and the tourism industry.

While hefty taxes and cess are resulting in frequent increase in the price of liquor and driving away our patrons, the decision to raise the age of eligibility to buy liquor from 21 years to 23 years is driving youngsters towards more lethal drugs. If beer pubs could be started in hotels with 3-Star and above classification, it would help the youngsters use lighter liquor and avoid drugs.

There are as many as 400 Grama Panchayats in the State that do not have bars or liquor outlets. New liquor outlets of

the various State and cooperative agencies should ideally be opened in these places. Instead, what the authorities have been doing is to open them close to bar hotels. New bar licenses are also being issued without rhyme and reason. This is aggravating the crisis of hotels that have been started with Rs. 20 to 30 crore loan. Many are now finding it impossible to honour their loan commitments. If the current situation persists, the hotel industry in Kerala would meet with the same fate as that of the cashew industry in Kollam.

As a matter of policy, bars were shut down by the UDF government in 2014. They were reopened only in 2017 after the LDF came to power. But that was done on condition that only hotels with 3-Star or 4-Star classification would be allowed to run bars. Each bar owner had to spend Rs. 8 to 15 crore to secure the 3-Star and 4-Star classification. It also took them 2 to 3 years to complete the work. By the time they finally received the bar licences, the Covid-19 pandemic struck, forcing all hotels to shut down. Hotels resumed operation only two years later in 2022. In short, it took the bar hotels 8 years to resume operations after the 2014 ban. This has dealt a heavy financial blow to the hotel industry.

The government had announced an amnesty scheme for bar hotels before the onset of Covid-19, but most hotel owners could not make use of it because of the acute financial crunch they faced and the impossibility of securing personal loans. Bank loans were out of the question as, by then, the CIBIL score of most hotel owners had plummeted. In short, most hotel owners had to give the miss to the amnesty scheme. This is why the FKHA wants the amnesty scheme to continue.

Governments take decisions in response to situations obtaining at a particular point in time. Such decisions might be relevant at the time they are taken, but they become irrelevant or counterproductive as time passes. Thus, every decision that has implications for any industrial or entrepreneurial activity must undergo review and change to make them relevant to the changing times. The decisions relating to bar timings, ToT and liquor purchase age must all be reviewed in the light of the above.

The situation is dire in the hotel industry, which is one of the major employers in the State. There has been a 40 per cent fall in business in bars. The FKHA would appeal to the government to conduct a study about the crisis in the hotel sector, particular in the case of bar hotels, and go in for appropriate policy changes that would ensure survival of this employment-generating industry.



V. Sunil Kumar
President, FKHA
& Editor, Swagat

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മാലിന്യ മൂക്ത കേരളം: കേരളത്തിന്റെ പുതിയ മുദ്രാവാക്യം

കേരളത്തിന്റെ പ്രകൃതി സമ്പന്നതയും ആതിഥ്യമര്യാദയും അനുഭവിക്കാൻ ദേശ-വിദേശങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് കേരളത്തിലേക്കെത്തുന്ന ലക്ഷക്കണക്കിന് വിനോദസഞ്ചാരികൾക്ക് വ്യത്യസ്തമായും വെടിപ്പുമുള്ള കേരളം അവതരിപ്പിക്കാനുള്ള തീവ്രയത്നത്തിലാണ് സംസ്ഥാന തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പ് - അശോകൻ പള്ളിക്കൽ എഴുതുന്നു.



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Training in hospitality FKHA blazes a new trail

The Federation of Kerala Hotels Association (FKHA) has addressed a crying need of the hospitality industry with the establishment of the FKHA Institute of Hotel Management (FKHA-IHM) in 2019, writes Sqn. Ldr K.B. Padmadas (Rtd.), General Secretary, FKHA



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AYODHYA: CITY OF SPIRITUAL GRANDEUR

Ayodhya, which is in the news with the consecration of the Ram Mandir, situated in Uttar Pradesh, is poised for what is being billed as the biggest transformation in the history of the ancient city, writes Siji Nair



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Lakshadweep Magical Tapestry of the Sun, Sand the Sea

Lakshadweep, with its pristine beaches lapped by translucent waters, vibrant coral reefs teeming with marine life, and swaying coconut palms, is a heaven on earth, writes **Harisankar**.



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വെള്ളാർ ആർട്സ് & ക്രാഫ്റ്റ്സ് വില്ലേജ് കലകളുടെ സൗവർണ്ണശോഭ

നഗരത്തിരക്കിൽ നിന്നകലെ മനോഹരമായി രൂപകൽപ്പന ചെയ്തെടുത്ത ഈ കലാകാരന്മാരുടെ ഗ്രാമത്തിൽ നൃത്ത-സംഗീത പരിപാടികളുടെ അലയൊലികൾക്ക് അവസാനമില്ല. കേരളീയ കരകൗശല നിർമ്മാണത്തിൽ പ്രഗല്ഭരായ ഒരു കൂട്ടം കലാകാരന്മാർ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന തനതു കരകൗശല വസ്തുക്കൾ അവരിൽ നിന്നും നേരിട്ടു വാങ്ങിക്കാവുന്ന ഒരടം കൂടിയാണിത് - മേരി സാമുവൽ എഴുതുന്നു.



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THRILLS UNLIMITED Heart-pounding adventure awaits thrill-junkies visiting Kerala this year

Kerala is about to ignite your spirit of adventure with a quartet of pulse-pounding festivals in the coming months.



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No time for gym? Go for BWE !

All exercise is beneficial. But even stacked up against other types of workouts, Body Weight Exercise has a lot to offer, writes **Harisankar**.



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P.R.S. OBEROI (1929-2023) Visionary Hotelier

Prithviraj Singh “Biki” Oberoi, the creator of the luxury hotel brand ‘The Oberoi’, which represents the fine luxury segment of the hotel industry, he changed the face of hotel business in India, has passed on. A Tribute by **Kiran Kumar**.



Azerbaijan to participate in South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) in New Delhi



Azerbaijan is gearing up to join the international tourism exhibition, South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE), scheduled to take place in New Delhi, India, from February 22-24 next year. The announcement, reported by Azernews and sourced from Azerbaijan's State Tourism Agency, indicates that preparations for the event have already commenced.

SATTE is acknowledged as Asia's premier travel and tourism exhibition, and the participation of tourist boards from over 50 countries is anticipated at the upcoming event.

Azerbaijan's State Tourism Agency is actively getting ready to showcase the country's tourism offerings and engage with industry stakeholders during this significant international platform.

Travel time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad to shrink by two hours from March 2024



In a significant infrastructure and engineering upgrade, the Western Railway (WR) is entering the final stages of enhancements that will enable trains to operate at speeds of up to 160 km per hour, resulting in a substantial reduction in

travel time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

The anticipated completion date for this project is March 2024, offering commuters the prospect of saving approximately two hours on their journey. Currently, the travel duration between the two cities ranges from six to eight hours.

The WR is actively engaged in comprehensive work on two key corridors, namely Mumbai to Nagda and Vadodara to Ahmedabad, with an investment of ₹ 3,950 crore. Thirteen out of the 15 planned

improvements on the Virar-Surat stretch have already been successfully executed.

These encompass the enhancement of rail track quality, strategic elevation of tracks as necessary, adequate ballasting (stones on rail lines) for track cushioning, sleeper improvements, and rehabilitation of foot and road overbridges. The concerted efforts aim to not only enhance the speed and efficiency of train travel but also ensure the safety and quality of the railway infrastructure.

Thiruvananthapuram International Airport hosts over 4 lakh passengers in December



Thiruvananthapuram: More than 4 lakh passengers travelled through the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport in December 2023, which is highest ever after Covid-19 pandemic period. Out of the 4.14 lakh passengers who used the airport in December 2023, 2.42 lakh were domestic and 1.72 lakh were foreign passengers. As compared to December 2022, the last month of 2023 saw a 26 % increase in passenger flow. A total of 41.48 lakh passengers

travelled through the Thiruvananthapuram airport in 2023 as compared to 33 lakh passengers in 2022, which marked 25% traffic growth year-on-year.

Thiruvananthapuram International airport is gearing up to improve infrastructure for a seamless and better travel experience in view of the increase in the number of flights and passengers, an airport press note said.

Air India goes in for cloud transformation and lounge revitalization



Air India is actively enhancing its operational efficiency and overall customer experience through two key initiatives.

Firstly, Air India has successfully transitioned from traditional data centres in Mumbai and New

Delhi to a fully cloud-based IT infrastructure. This strategic move positions Air India as a trailblazer among major global airlines, operating all computational workloads exclusively in the cloud. This shift not

only signifies technological agility and scalability but also accelerates the airline's digital transformation efforts. The closure of the historic data centres is projected to yield substantial annual savings of nearly a million dollars.

In another significant move, Air

India has enlisted the expertise of the renowned hospitality interior design firm Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA) to revamp its lounges at both the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi and the JFK Airport in New York. This initiative underscores Air India's commitment to elevating passenger experience, ensuring that its lounges reflect world-class design and comfort.

Together, these initiatives showcase Air India's dedication to staying at the forefront of technological advancements and providing passengers with an enhanced and contemporary travel experience.

Launch of International Green Key Certification in India marks a milestone in Sustainable Tourism



In a significant development, the Green Key International Certification scheme for hotels and tourism facilities has been officially introduced in New Delhi. The launch event was presided over by Daniel Schaffer, CEO, Foundation for Environment Education (FEE) Copenhagen, signalling the initiation of Green Key operations and certifications in India.

Heading the entire certification process in the country is Dr. Jagat Mangaraj, National Operator

– Green Key India, and former Director, Institute of Hotel Management, Ahmedabad. The launch ceremony was attended by Padmashri Kartikeya V Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environment Education (CEE), and Sanskriti Menon, Senior Programme Director at CEE.

The Green Key Certification stands as a globally recognized standard of excellence in environmental responsibility and sustainable practices within the hospitality

and tourism sector. Implemented in India by CEE Ahmedabad, a member organization of FEE Copenhagen, the certification builds upon the success of the Blue Flag Certification for beaches, previously undertaken by CEE in collaboration with FEE.

Leading international hotel brands such as Accor, Radisson, IHG, and Marriott have entered agreements with Green Key International, expressing their commitment to implementing this certification in India. With over 4000 establishments globally certified by Green Key across 60 countries, the certification spans hotels, campsites, hostels, conference facilities, and tourist attractions.

Launch of the Green Key International Certification scheme in India is expected to contribute to strategic and sustainable outcomes, fostering responsible tourism practices in India. The launch event witnessed the presence of numerous senior dignitaries from the hospitality and tourism industry, as well as academia.

Sri Lanka offers dual entry status on arrival to travellers from India and six other countries



With the objective of providing a boost to its tourism sector and attracting more visitors, Sri Lanka is giving dual entry status on arrival to travellers from India and 6 other countries.

According to an announcement by the Sri Lankan Department of Immigration and Emigration, the implementation of a new initiative granting free tourist visas to Indian travellers, who constitute the

largest inbound group to the island nation, the decision would take effect immediately.

The free tourist visa privilege is applicable to travellers from six other countries, namely China, Malaysia, Russia, Indonesia, Japan, and Thailand. The step is particularly significant considering the economic challenges faced by the nation, including a debt crisis and shortage of essential items like

food, medicine, cooking gas, and fuel. In an effort to address these issues, the International Monetary Fund had earlier agreed to provide a USD 3 billion bailout to Sri Lanka in March.

The newly introduced pilot project offers free tourist visas for the initial 30 days of stay and will remain in effect until March 31, 2024. Travellers arriving from India as well as the six other designated countries, will benefit from dual entry status upon arrival. However, it is important to note that the visa validity will be restricted to a 30-day stay in Sri Lanka.

Historically, India has been Sri Lanka's primary source of inbound tourism, and recent arrival figures underscore its significance. In October 2023, Indian arrivals topped the list with over 28,000 visitors, constituting 26% of the total arrivals.

Sikkim opens to tourists after floods, except the northern parks



Putting behind it the floods that affected life in the State recently, Sikkim government has announced that all its popular tourist spots are now accessible to visitors, except the extreme northern part, which remains temporarily inaccessible.

Tourists love travelling to this part of the country during this time due to serene and pleasant weather conditions that will allow visitors

to explore places without any hassle. Official sources say that popular regions across various districts, including Gangtok, Soreng, Namchi, Pakyong, and Gyalshing are safe for travel.

An advisory has also been issued stating that, apart from the extreme northern regions that are temporarily off-limits due to accessibility issues, all other

destinations in the State have returned to normalcy after the floods in River Teesta. The advisory sought to assure prospective tourists that there are no untoward situations in the accessible parts of Sikkim.

The flash flood in River Teesta, which was triggered by a cloudburst on October 4, had resulted in the tragic loss of many lives. Despite the challenges posed by this natural disaster, the resilience of the region is evident as it made swift efforts to restore normalcy and ensure the safety of tourists.

With more than a million visitors visiting the State annually, tourism stands as a vital economic activity for Sikkim, underscoring the significance of re-establishing a welcoming environment for travellers.

Draft policy formulated to enhance tourism's contribution to economy



The Tourism Ministry, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, has formulated a draft

National Tourism Policy to enhance the contribution of tourism to the Indian economy. The policy seeks to make India a year-round tourist destination.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Union Tourism and Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy said another strategic objective of the draft National Tourism Policy is to create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism sector and ensure the supply of

skilled workforce and enhance the competitiveness of the sector and attract investment from private players.

According to the Tourism Minister, the draft National Tourism Policy envisages encouraging innovation, exploring new markets, opening of new destinations and aligning tourism development with the sustainable development goals by leveraging India's culture and heritage.

DigiYatra's facial recognition tech to reach 25 more airports by 2024



Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said that DigiYatra facility, provides contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various check points at airports based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), would be made available at 25 more airports in 2024.

DigiYatra will be introduced at 14 airports in the first phase and another 11 airports in the second phase. By the end of 2024, DigiYatra will be available at 25 more airports and the total number of airports with the facility will increase to 38 covering 95 per cent of the domestic passenger traffic. Currently, DigiYatra facility is available at 13 airports that handle around 85 per cent of the country's domestic air passenger traffic.

The data shared by a passenger for DigiYatra is stored in an encrypted format. For availing the service, a passenger has to register his or her details on DigiYatra app using

Aadhaar-based validation and a self-image capture. In the next step, the boarding pass has to be scanned and the credentials shared with the airport.

At the airport e-gate, the passenger has to first scan the bar-coded boarding pass and the facial recognition system installed at the e-gate will validate the passenger's identity and travel document. Once this process is done, the passenger can enter the airport through the e-gate. The passenger will have to follow the normal procedure to clear the security check and board the aircraft.

SIHRA to host annual convention in Visakhapatnam

The South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA), regional association of FHRAI, is gearing up for its annual convention, scheduled to take place from January 19 to 21, 2024, in the picturesque city of Visakhapatnam.

SIHRA's annual

convention in Visakhapatnam would not only be noteworthy as convergence of industry leaders but also an opportunity to explore the city's unique blend of tradition and modernity.

Attendees can expect a dynamic programme, insightful discussions, and networking opportunities against the backdrop of Visakhapatnam's vibrant culture and economic vitality.

Karnataka to unveil new tourism policy



Karnataka Tourism Minister H.K. Patil has announced that the State Government is set to unveil a new tourism policy by the end of January 2024 with the aim of revitalising tourism in Karnataka.

The policy is being designed to ensure provision of basic infrastructure at all tourist spots, fostering both public and private participation in adoption of monuments.

Speaking at the launch of the

new logo, tagline, mascot and a blog commissioned by the Department of Tourism, the Minister Patil said that the new tourism policy aims to resolve inter-departmental disputes between the Union and the State Governments, as well as differences among

various stakeholders, historians and officials involved in promoting tourism activities.

Providing details on heritage conservation and adoption plans of the government, he said the policy would seek to preserve the State's rich history, culture, heritage, wildlife and natural beauty. The new tourism policy will also prioritise education tourism, agriculture tourism, weekend adventure and wildlife tourism and religious tourism.

Patil highlighted the presence of over 25,000 monuments of historical and heritage significance in Karnataka. The Government has thus far notified only 856 such monuments for conservation, protection and promotion. He pledged to notify an additional 500 monuments next year, taking measures for their protection.

The Minister announced plans to involve private firms, NGOs, civil society organisations and the public in their conservation, particularly those with tourism potential. He revealed that in a recent virtual meeting with tourism stakeholders, over 25 NRIs residing abroad, including the United States, had expressed interest in adopting and protecting these monuments.

Patil said the government was committed to the recovery of stolen idols and artefacts of the State, currently scattered across various parts of the world. Some of these, though reported stolen, had been on display in museums in England.

IATO seeks PM's intervention for revival of inbound tourism



The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention to revive inbound tourism in the country.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, the tourism body has mentioned the

reasons for the decline in tourist arrivals and suggested steps to revive inbound tourism which has remained much below 2019-20 level.

The letter has drawn the Prime Minister's attention to the statement recently made in Parliament by the Union Tourism Minister G. Kishen Reddy that only 85.9 lakh Foreign Tourist Visitors (FTVs) had arrived in the country in 2022 as compared to 3.14 crore in 2019.

The letter lists multiple reasons for the decline in tourist arrivals such as withdrawal of incentives to inbound tour operators on their foreign exchange earnings which were being used for overseas

marketing and promotions and lack of trained tourism manpower in Indian Embassies which are also not able to do regular interaction and follow up with the foreign tour operators.

It also cites lack of marketing and promotion of tourism in overseas markets as budgetary support for overseas promotion like Fam Trips to India and overseas road shows have been withdrawn. Further it mentions non-availability of funds with the Ministry of Tourism for participation in overseas travel marts and approval required from the Ministry of Finance for participation in each mart as a big hurdle in promoting inbound tourism.



ധന്യം, അർത്ഥസാന്ദ്രം

എഫ്.കെ.എച്ച്.എ. മാഗസിൻ 'സ്വാഗത്' മുൻ ചീഫ് സെക്രട്ടറി കെ. ജയകുമാർ ഐ.എ.എസ്. (റിട്ട.) ട്രിവാൻഡ്രം ചേംബർ ഓഫ് കോമേഴ്സ് & ഇൻഡസ്ട്രി പ്രസിഡൻ്റ് എസ്.എൻ. രഘുചന്ദ്രൻ നായർക്ക് നൽകി പ്രകാശനം ചെയ്തു.



കെ. ജയകുമാർ
ഐ.എ.എസ്. (R(td.))

ഫെഡറേഷൻ ഓഫ് കേരള ഹോട്ടൽസ് അസോസിയേഷൻ (എഫ്.കെ.എച്ച്.എ) പ്രസിഡൻ്റ് കെ. ജയകുമാർ ഐ.എ.എസ്. (റിട്ട.) ട്രിവാൻഡ്രം ചേംബർ ഓഫ് കോമേഴ്സ് & ഇൻഡസ്ട്രി ഹാളിൽ നവംബർ 15ന് നടന്ന പ്രാവീണ്യം ഉള്ളതായ ചടങ്ങിൽ മുൻ ചീഫ് സെക്രട്ടറിയും ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഓഫ് മാനേജ്മെൻ്റ് ഇൻ ഗവൺമെൻ്റ് (ഐ.എം.ജി) ഡയറക്ടറുമായ കെ. ജയകുമാർ ഐ.എ.എസ്. ട്രിവാൻഡ്രം ചേംബർ ഓഫ് കോമേഴ്സ് & ഇൻഡസ്ട്രി പ്രസിഡൻ്റ് എസ്. എൻ. രഘുചന്ദ്രൻ നായർക്ക് അദ്ദേഹം നൽകി പ്രകാശനം ചെയ്തു.

സവിശേഷ പരിശീലനം നൽകുന്നതിന് ഐ.എം.ജി. തയ്യാറാണെന്ന് ചടങ്ങിനെ അഭിസംബോധന ചെയ്ത ശ്രീ. ജയകുമാർ പറഞ്ഞു.

ഫെഡറേഷൻ ഓഫ് കേരള ഹോട്ടൽസ് അസോസിയേഷൻ പ്രസിഡൻ്റും 'സ്വാഗത്'ന്റെ എഡിറ്ററുമായ വി. സുനിൽ കുമാർ ചടങ്ങിൽ അധ്യക്ഷത വഹിച്ചു. ഫെഡറേഷൻ തിരുവനന്തപുരം ജില്ലാ പ്രസിഡൻ്റ് ആർ. തുളസി, സെക്രട്ടറി എം.കെ. ബിജു, ആലപ്പുഴ ജില്ലാ പ്രസിഡൻ്റ് ജി. മധു എന്നിവർ പ്രസംഗിച്ചു. ഫെഡറേഷൻ ജനറൽ സെക്രട്ടറിയും 'സ്വാഗത്'ന്റെ പ്രിൻ്ററും പബ്ലിഷറുമായ സ്കൂൾ ഓഫ് മാനേജ്മെൻ്റ് കെ. ബി. പദ്മദാസ് (റിട്ട.) ചടങ്ങിന് സ്വാഗതവും ഭ്രഷറർ ബിനോയ് ജോസഫ് നന്ദിയും പറഞ്ഞു. ഫെഡറേഷൻ്റെ അംഗങ്ങളും അഭ്യർത്ഥകരും അടക്കം പ്രാവീണ്യം ഉള്ളതായ സദസ്സ് ചടങ്ങിന് സാക്ഷ്യം വഹിച്ചു.



ഹോട്ടൽ മാനേജ്മെൻ്റ് രംഗത്ത് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നവർക്ക്

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts partners with Sunniva Inn for Golden Tulip Hotel in Nepal



Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has officially inked a management agreement with Sunniva Inn Boutique Hotel & Spa to introduce a Golden Tulip branded hotel in Nepal. The upcoming Golden Tulip Bhairahawa will be the 12th addition to Sarovar Hotels & Resorts' growing portfolio and marks the debut of the Golden Tulip brand in Nepal.

Scheduled to open its doors in May 2024, the hotel is strategically

situated in Bhairahawa, within 8 km of the Gautam Buddha International Airport and a convenient 30-minute drive from Lumbini. Featuring 52 well-appointed rooms designed with contemporary aesthetics, the hotel will offer two exquisite restaurants providing a gastronomic journey, a rooftop bar, and a swimming pool.

Additional amenities include a state-of-the-art fitness centre, a spa, and cutting-edge meeting

and event facilities, positioning it as an ideal venue for conferences, seminars, and special events. An entertainment zone and a casino are also slated to be introduced at a later date.

During the inaugural ceremony, Ajay K Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, and Director, Louvre Hotels India, said, "The signing of Golden Tulip Bhairahawa is aligned with our growth strategy and vision to expand our presence in international markets. We anticipate significant demand and opportunities in the region for established brands that cater to discerning global leisure travellers seeking to experience the natural beauty, heritage cuisine, and culture of Nepal. We are delighted to collaborate with Sunniva Inn Boutique Hotel & Spa to introduce a world-class brand from our hotel portfolio."

Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels unveils inaugural property in Igatpuri



Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels has announced the grand opening of Regenta Place Igatpuri, marking a significant entry into the heart of Maharashtra. As the 14th addition to the hotel portfolio in the State, following the successful launch of Regenta Place Kolhapur, this new property exemplifies the brand's commitment to expanding its footprint.

Nestled amid the picturesque Sahyadri Mountain Ranges, Regenta Place Igatpuri offers 50 elegantly designed rooms spanning four distinct categories, each featuring balconies or sit-outs. Many of these well-appointed rooms provide guests with panoramic views of the breathtaking mountain range and the lush green valley.

Beyond serving as a serene retreat, the property is strategically positioned to become a premier choice for dream weddings and MICE events, promising tailor-made, exceptional experiences that leave enduring memories. The dining experience at Regenta Place Igatpuri is enriched by 'PINXX,' a multi-cuisine restaurant offering a diverse range of culinary delights. Additionally, the hotel features 'Mist Sky,' a unique rooftop lounge and bar that embodies a serene and tranquil ambiance.

The property also boasts a refreshing swimming pool catering to both adults and kids, accompanied by an entertaining indoor recreation centre. With families in mind, there's an engaging kids' play zone, establishing Regenta Place Igatpuri as the ultimate destination for a rejuvenating hillside getaway.

Courtyard by Marriott debuts in historic Gorakhpur with new hotel



Courtyard by Marriott, a distinguished member of Marriott Bonvoy's impressive portfolio of 31 brands, proudly announced the inauguration of

Courtyard by Marriott Gorakhpur, marking the brand's first entry into one of India's most historically significant cities.

Aligning with the brand's commitment to better serve the needs of travellers globally, Courtyard by Marriott Gorakhpur aims to offer a refined

yet comfortable environment, catering to guests traveling for business or leisure.

Situated in the heart of Gorakhpur's city centre and conveniently

located just a brief 30-minute drive from Mahayogi Gorakhnath Airport, the 97-room hotel is well-connected to the Gorakhpur Junction Railway Station and the Gorakhpur Bus Stand.

With the Ramgarh Tal Lake as a serene backdrop, the hotel invites guests to immerse themselves in the rich historical and cultural significance of Gorakhpur. Iconic destinations such as the Gorakhnath Temple, the profound teachings of the Geeta Press, and the UNESCO world heritage site and birthplace of Lord Buddha, Lumbini, are easily accessible for exploration.

Niraamaya Wellness Retreats expands to Munnar, Kerala



Niraamaya Lifestyle Resorts has made its entry into Munnar in Kerala by signing a management

agreement with INKURE Real Estate Investment Company. This addition brings Niraamaya's wellness retreat count in Kerala to a total of 6. The property offers an array of amenities including an all-day restaurant and bar, fitness centre, swimming pool, and

comprehensive spa facilities and is conveniently located near Kochi airport.

Allen Machado, CEO, Niraamaya Business Group, said, "This ideal sanctuary, renowned for its natural allure and seamless accessibility, offers a canvas to curate distinctive experiences for leisure and wellness escapes."

Justin Mary Raphael, Group Chairman of INKURE Real Estate Investment and Hospitality Management Group, said, "This exciting venture aims to unlock the true potential of this stunning yet undiscovered region, creating the perfect destination for discerning travellers."

Lemon Tree Hotels signs a new property in Kundapura, Karnataka



Lemon Tree Hotels has announced its latest signing - Lemon Tree Hotel, Kundapura, Karnataka. The property is expected to open by FY27 and shall be managed by Carnation Hotels Private Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary and the

management arm of Lemon Tree Hotels Limited.

Lemon Tree Hotel, Kundapura, Karnataka will feature 80 well-appointed rooms, restaurants, meeting room, swimming pool, fitness center and other public

areas. The Mangalore International Airport is 90 kms while the Udupi railway station is 38 kms from the hotel. The hotel is also well connected by roadways for both public and private transport.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahesh Aiyer CEO & Carnation Hotels (the management subsidiary of Lemon Tree Hotels), commented, "We are pleased to announce the expansion of our portfolio in Karnataka. Religious tourism is a rapidly growing segment and we, as a brand, are actively expanding in this segment. This opening will be in addition to our eight existing hotels and resorts in the state.



SOULFUL REJUVENATION

An experiential account of a journey towards wellness at the over-a-century old Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam Hospital, a tranquil Ayurvedic oasis in Kerala



Lakshmi Samira Goth

The Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam Hospital provides almost the whole gamut of Ayurveda therapies that are contemporarily available anywhere. The hospital gives you a glimpse of the ancient Indian science of healing, and its potential, perhaps in a cordial blend of the ancient and the modern. A first person account.

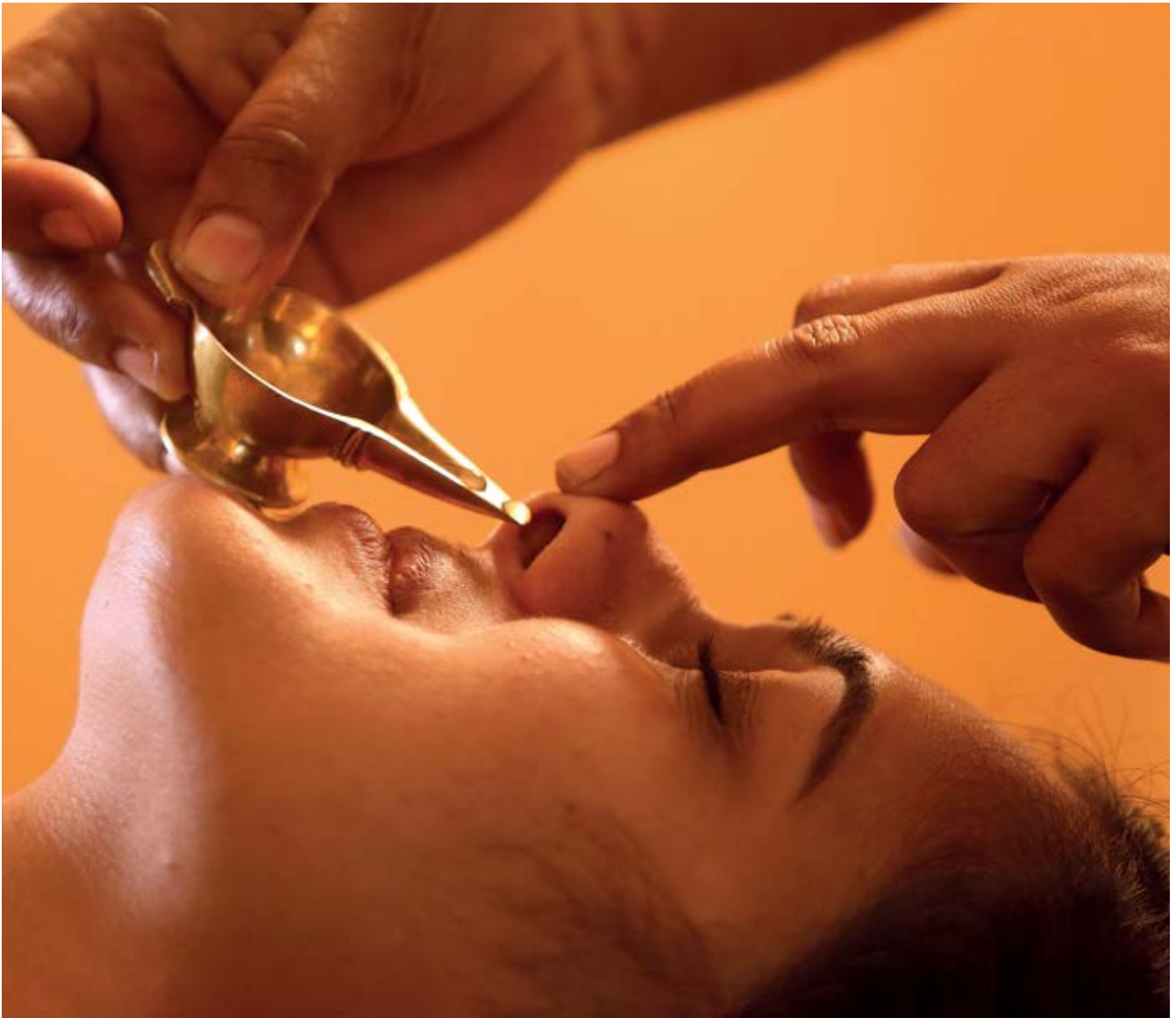
My first experience with Ayurveda dates back to 1998, when my husband, a Malayali, took me to the Fort Cochin Ayurveda Government Hospital to get treated for back pain. The treatment involved internal medicines and abhyanga or oil massage for a week and it worked well. My back pain disappeared. The cost was a pittance for such a treatment and the facilities were a bit crude, but I had no complaints. The government hospitals in India specialising in modern medicine, Ayurveda or Homoeo provide virtually free medical service to the

public without any ID or Insurance check. We had just got married, had to find work and till then save every rupee possible.

Five years later, I resorted to Ayurveda once again, this time at a private establishment in Vypeen, across the harbour mouth from Fort Cochin, which proved to be pleasantly different, but considerably more expensive. This experience prompted me to repeat my rejuvenation therapies every year after that. In the meantime, we moved away from Kochi, so I tried out other clinics, which all had their pros and cons, but I was

never entirely satisfied. Some were spotlessly clean, but the treatments missed their authenticity. Where hospitality excelled, the treatment lacked its punch, and vice versa.

Then our Vaidya in the city, Dr G.K. Menon, who continued his father's traditional Ayurveda practice on Palace Road in Mattancherry (now an in-patient clinic, 'Dr. Menon's Madhava Ayurveda Hospital') and whom my husband had been consulting for his spondylosis, recommended we go to Shoranur, which we did years later in 2018.



Authentic as it comes

Situated on the northern banks of the mythological River Bharathappuzha (or Nila) is the world's oldest Ayurvedic hospital run by the Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam (Ayurveda Society of Kerala). The institution stretches over 11 acres of lush greenery, dotted by diverse cottages and rooms that can house 105 in-patients at a time.

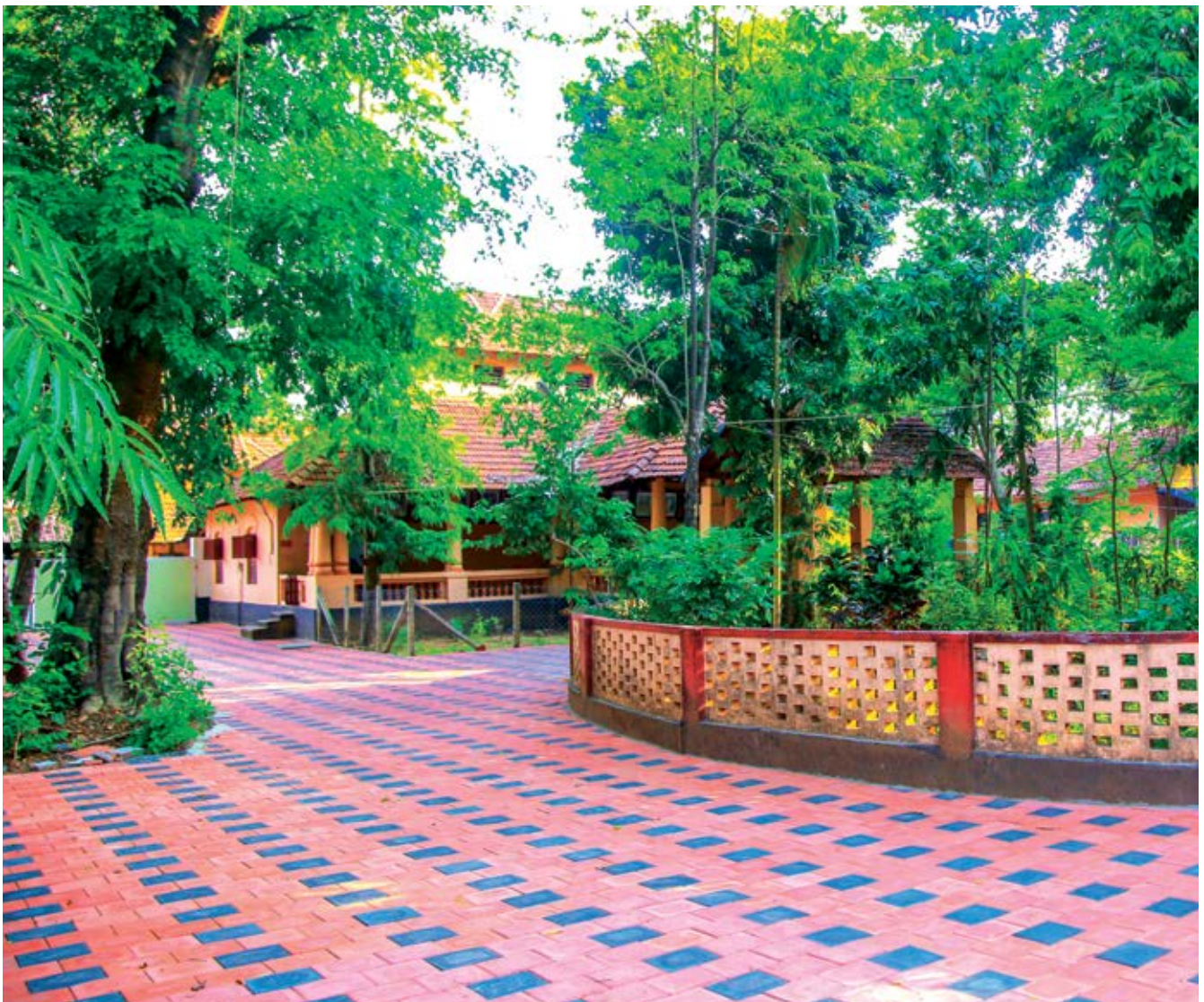
The Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam Hospital provides almost the whole gamut of Ayurveda therapies that are contemporarily available anywhere. However, the hospital gives you a glimpse of the ancient

Indian science of healing, and its potential, perhaps in a cordial blend of the ancient and the modern.

It offers a treasure trove of therapies that go beyond symptom management, focusing on restoring balance and harmony within the body, mind, and spirit. From gentle massages to herbal concoctions and rejuvenating rituals, the hospital tailors its approach to each individual's unique needs and constitution.

The hospital presents a symphony of treatments for ailments ranging from the very common to rare as

Situated on the northern bank of the River Bharathappuzha (or Nila) is the world's oldest Ayurvedic hospital run by the Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam (Ayurveda Society of Kerala)





well as lifestyle diseases. A panel of experienced doctors attend to the patients or wellness seekers to identify their problems and prescribe the right therapies.

Besides the patient accommodations and official buildings, the spacious grounds house a factory for Ayurvedic medicines, a herbal garden, the now defunct Kayakalpa Kuteeram (see box) as well as a Ganesha temple, all screened by immensely lush trees that are home to many birds and squirrels.

Thanks to this lovely greenery, patients can enjoy peaceful strolls in their leisure time, have a peek at the ample herbarium or simply relax on one of the many benches in the compound and observe the lively birds, among them peacocks. Deer and wild boars are also seen grazing in the nearby fields and on the dry riverbed at certain times of the year.

The hospital premises lie not far from Shoranur railway station, so even if you don't come in your vehicle, it is easy to reach by rickshaw when arriving by train. After registering at the front office, one is directed to a doctor who thoroughly enquires about any ailments, medical history and requirements.

Another feature that impresses us is that one doesn't have to move out of one's unit, which ranges from single-room facilities to small cottages. Almost all accommodations have a treatment room with an attached bathroom, and a sitting and dining area besides the bedroom, often a second bathroom.

The vegetarian food is prepared in their in-house canteen and delivered to the cottage. Some vegetables are also grown on the premises. The medicines, straight from the pharmacy, are brought

to you at the stipulated times. The doctors will visit at least once, often twice a day to make sure that you are taken good care of. If you need anything from any department of the hospital, you can reach the respective contact by intercom. There is a doctor on call 24/7.

All the treatments are conducted at your place of accommodation, which makes this a truly relaxing experience. In case any further medical checks need to be carried out, a driver takes you across the river to the Ayurvedic College Hospital.

All the staff are amiable, helpful and accommodating, and now that we have come here for the last six years, we are greeted like old acquaintances and feel quite at home during the two weeks we spend here each year. The hospital management is always open to suggestions and tries to implement them as much as they can.

Exemplary history

For enthusiasts of historical tales, this institution holds a distinct allure. Other than being the first hospital in the world to offer Ayurveda to the public, the establishment narrates a captivating chapter of reconciliation between the ancient realms of Kozhikode and Kochi. Here, the erstwhile enmities of the respective Rajas were set aside in a noble collaboration for the collective welfare of their people.

The genesis of this remarkable narrative unfolded in 1902, with the founding of the Samajam at Chalappuram in Kozhikode, titled Arya Vaidya Samajam. The visionary behind this initiative was none other than the Zamorin of Calicut, Manavikrama Ettan Raja, driven by a fervent desire to enhance the health and well-being of his subjects, transcending the barriers of caste and religion. Simultaneously, a parallel endeavour took root in Thrissur, under the patronage of the Cochin Raja, Rama Varma XV. Despite the



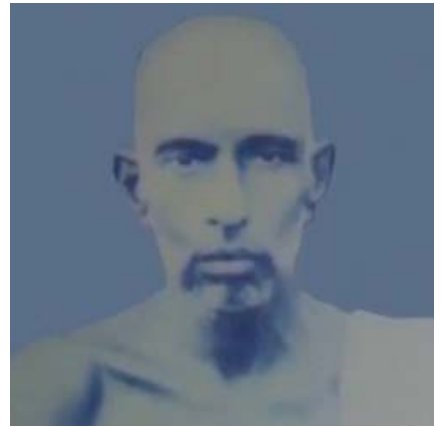
Manavikrama Ettan Raja



Thaikath Narayanan Moos

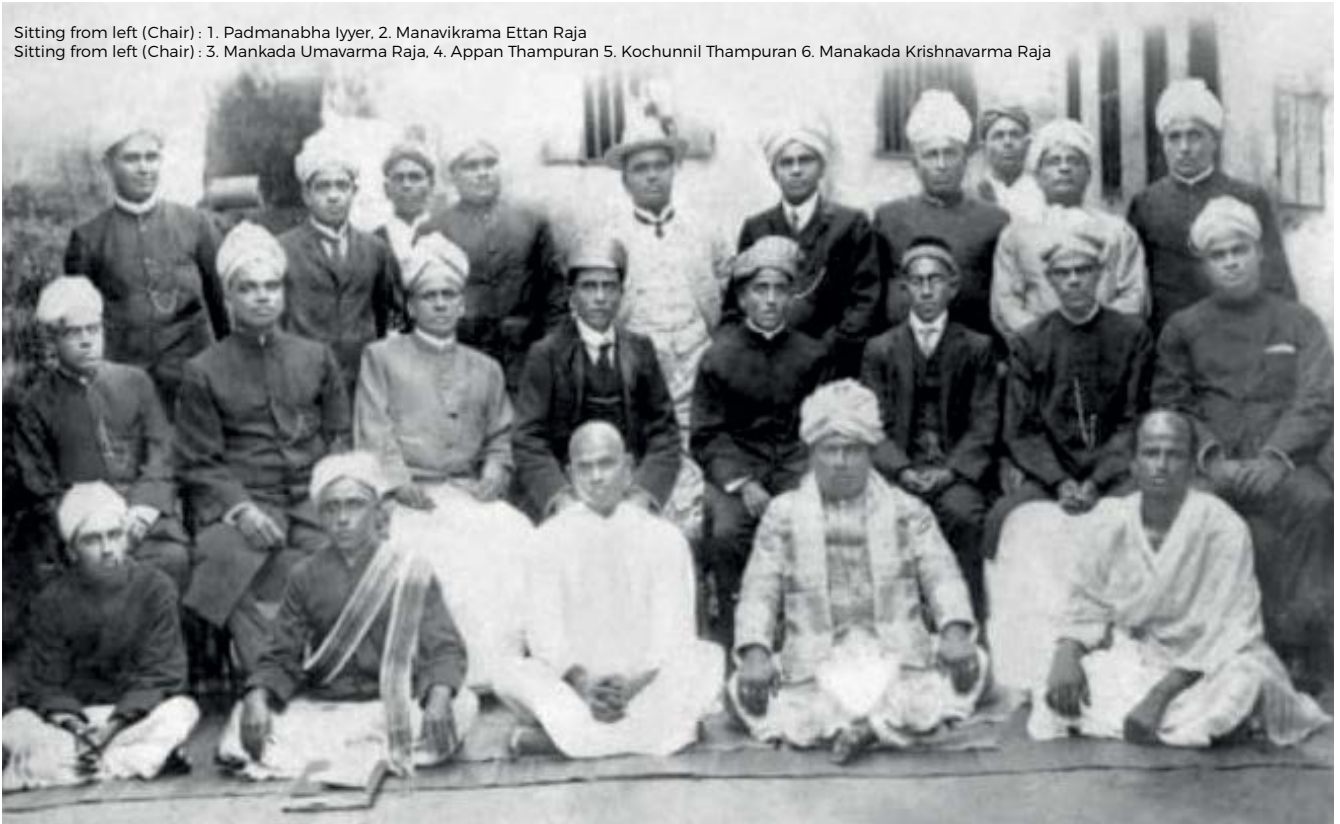


Rama Varma Appan Thampuran



Thriprangode Parameswaran Moosad

Sitting from left (Chair) : 1. Padmanabha Iyyer, 2. Manavikrama Ettan Raja
Sitting from left (Chair) : 3. Mankada Umavarma Raja, 4. Appan Thampuran 5. Kochunnill Thampuran 6. Manakada Krishnavarma Raja



Other than being the first hospital in the world to offer Ayurveda to the public, the Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam hospital narrates a captivating tale of reconciliation between the princely states of Kozhikode and Kochi.



historical animosities between these princely states, a rare agreement was forged to synergize efforts for the greater good.

The subsequent decision to relocate the Arya Vaidya Samajam to the serene environs along the river Nila in Cheruthuruthy marked a pivotal moment. In 1914, reborn as a benevolent entity named Keraleeya Ayurveda Samajam, the institution found its roots in the shared commitment of the Cochin Raja, who generously donated the land, and the Zamorin, who provided the essential funds for the hospital's development. A distinguished panel of physicians and Ashta Vaidyas, collectively known as Chikitsa Yogam, dedicated themselves to the well-being of their patients.

Noteworthy is the transformative shift in the British perspective towards Ayurveda, traditionally met with disdain for its indigenous



Samajam Garden

roots. This change was spurred by an extraordinary incident where Sir Basil Scott, the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, experienced a miraculous recovery from a chronic stomach disorder under the care of Triprangode Parameswaran Moossad. In recognition of this remarkable feat, Viceroy Lord Charles Harding bestowed upon him the esteemed title of "Vaidyaratnam", the jewel among physicians. Thus, this institution not only stands as a beacon of medical history but also as a testament to the harmonious convergence of

divergent histories for the greater well-being of humanity.

A German national married to an Indian, Lakshmi Samira Goth divides her time between India and Germany. She has translated more than a dozen books on Ayurveda into German. She runs a translation agency, Geckolingua Translations International, based in Freiburg, Germany, together with her husband George Thundiparambil. She can be reached at samira.goth@gmail.com

KAYAKALPA KUTEERAM

Kayakalpa Kuteeram or the “hut for the rejuvenation of the body” is a unique piece of architecture that is maintained as a museum piece by the K.A. Samajam. The hut, situated inside the herbarium and made in traditional Kerala style in plastered stone and tiles, has no windows. It has one small door situated on the rear side of the hut.

According to our physician, Dr. Mruthyunjaya Prasad Warriar, this kayakalpa method is an extreme therapy for rejuvenation that has gone extinct in recent times. The subject for rejuvenation lives inside this hut continuously for six months

without stepping out, subsisting exclusively on rasayanas.

Dr. Warriar arranged the unlocking of the door of this hut. It was surprisingly austere and simple. You entered the small door at the back and found facing a wall that is the back wall of another inner chamber. You could walk either to your left or right and go around to find another small door-sized opening on the opposite side of the entrance door. As you enter the second chamber, you once again face the back wall of another chamber and you can walk around either way to the other side. There you find another small entrance

that opens to the inner chamber, where no ray of the sun enters. That is where you live for six months without the sun and regenerate at the cell level.

Sounds a little eery, but looks like there were many takers for this chikitsa not so long ago. I couldn't find any records or somebody with living memory, but I am certain somebody would come along and go all the way to unravel the mysteries of reverse ageing, or at least find some records that might throw more light on the Kayakalpa Kuteeram.





KOCHI QUEEN BECKONS THE WORLD

2023 ended on a joyous note for Kerala with the vibrant city of Kochi, famous as 'Queen of the Arabian Sea', being featured in the Conde Nast Traveller's list of the best places to visit in Asia in 2024.

Umasankar G.

To figure among some of the best in the world as a must-see place under the sun is a massive endorsement, to say the least. That's what Kochi, with all the potential to be the next happening place in India, achieved when Conde Nast Traveller, the London-based upmarket travel magazine listed Kochi as one of the best places to visit in Asia in 2024.

The magazine feature was all praise for Kochi's ravishing backwaters, languorous lagoons and radiant rivers and the many sustainable

initiatives and local festivals that places it apart among the many cities in India. The magazine hit the bull's eye when it zeroed in on the Kochi Water Metro, describing it as 'one of the first in the world' socially inclusive transport option connecting 10 islands along a 78-km network.

Yes, the Water Metro has proved to be a leap forward, offering an efficient and extremely enjoyable connectivity option for visitors to this city where history which has been a gracious host to visitors

from all corners of the world—from the Arab and Chinese traders to European merchant-masters to the modern-day travellers.

But this city is not only about history, it's about the present and about meeting challenges of the present in the most sustainable manner. The city's international airport is the first in the world to operate solely on solar energy and was recently upgraded with the introduction of a dedicated business jet terminal that is the largest in India.

In its essence, Kochi is not a big city. It's a tapestry woven with threads of history, vibrant culture, and a rapidly evolving modern spirit. Kochi pulsates with an energy that draws in travellers seeking a unique blend of ancient charm and contemporary dynamism.

History would beckon you to Fort Kochi, Mattancherry and Thripunithura, where the indigenous royalty's great deeds and the spirit and fragrances of Dutch and Portuguese influences come alive in the colourful houses, bustling spice markets, and the majestic Mattancherry Palace, adorned with intricate murals depicting scenes from the Ramayana.

Kochi's spiritual tapestry is as diverse as its history. There is the Jewish Synagogue, one of the oldest in India, the Santa Cruz Basilica in Fort Kochi and temples, though modest in their appearance, enthral you with murals and festivals. Tranquillity rules the serene backwaters, a view of which in the early morning hours is refreshing beyond words. Move a little into the interior, gliding under swaying palm fronds on a traditional houseboat, you can witness village life unfold along the way.

Kochi's modern avatar is equally captivating. Infopark hums with the energy of global giants and local innovators, propelling the city's digital growth. The



bustling Vallarpadam Container Transshipment Terminal solidifies Kochi's position as a key player in international trade.

Kochi's commitment to responsible tourism is evident in initiatives like The Blue Yonder, offering twilight dining experiences inspired by the city's iconic Chinese fishing nets. This focus on sustainability resonates with conscious travellers seeking an ethical travel experience.

The prestigious Kochi-Muziris Biennale, a contemporary art exhibition, establishes Kochi as a cultural hub, attracting art enthusiasts from around the globe. Kochi's aspirations are as ambitious as its spirit. The city's Smart City initiatives, encompassing intelligent traffic management and e-governance, aim to enhance liveability and efficiency. This commitment to progress positions Kochi as a city poised for a bright future.

Interestingly, the Conde Nast Traveller feature is not just about Kochi. It is only an entry point. The feature travels beyond to other

parts and initiatives of Kerala, showcasing Kerala as a land of sustainable tourist bounty. It says: "On a wider scale, Kerala Tourism 2.0, the state's \$43 million 2023-2024 sustainable tourism initiative, will focus on improving infrastructure and travel corridors between Kochi and less-visited destinations such as Munnar and Kozhikode—as well as local festivals, from the ancient temple gathering of Thrissur Pooram to the Kochi-Muziris Biennale."

Kochi's allure lies in its ability to seamlessly blend the old and the new, the traditional and the modern. It's a city where history whispers from ancient walls, innovation thrives in gleaming tech hubs, and culture pulsates in every vibrant street corner. So, pack your bags, wander its enchanting lanes, and discover for yourself why Kochi is not just a tourist destination, but a captivating glimpse into India's future.

Umasankar G. is a Kochi-based freelance journalist

മാലിന്യമുക്തം നവകേരളം കേരളത്തിന്റെ പുതിയ മുദ്രാവാക്യം



അശോകൻ പള്ളിക്കൽ

വിജ്ഞാനാധിഷ്ഠിത സമ്പദ്വ്യവസ്ഥയും, ടൂറിസം രംഗത്തെ നവീന ആശയങ്ങളും, സംരംഭക മുന്നേറ്റവും, ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ - ഗവേഷണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളും, ആരോഗ്യ രംഗത്തെ നേട്ടങ്ങളും, സാമൂഹിക സുരക്ഷാപെൻഷനുമെല്ലാം നവകേരളത്തിന്റെ കേളികൊട്ടാണ്. നവകേരളം ലക്ഷ്യമിടുന്ന മറ്റൊരു ആശയമാണ് മാലിന്യമുക്ത കേരളം.

കേരളത്തെ മാലിന്യമുക്തമാക്കാനുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ അതിവേഗം മുന്നേറുകയാണ്. 2024 മാർച്ചാണ് സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ ഈ പ്രഖ്യാപനത്തിന് നിശ്ചയിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള സമയപരിധി. രാജ്യത്തെ ഏറ്റവും വൃത്തിയുള്ള സംസ്ഥാനമായി കേരളത്തെ മാറ്റുക എന്ന ലക്ഷ്യത്തോടെ ഹരിത കേരള മിഷൻ, ശുചിത്വ മിഷൻ, തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയുടെ സംയുക്താ ഭിമുഖ്യത്തിൽ സമൂഹത്തിലെ എല്ലാ വിഭാഗം ജനങ്ങളെയും പങ്കാളികളാക്കിയാണ് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ. ശുചിത്വ മിഷൻ ഈ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് നേതൃത്വ പരമായ പങ്ക് വഹിക്കുന്നു.

വൈകാരികതയുടെ സ്വന്തം നാട് മാലിന്യമില്ലാത്ത സുന്ദര നാടായി മാറാനാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നത്. മാലിന്യമുക്തം നവകേരളം - അതാണ് സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ പുതിയ മുദ്രാവാക്യം. കേരളത്തിന്റെ സാമൂഹിക നേട്ടങ്ങൾ പലതും വികസിത രാജ്യങ്ങൾക്കൊപ്പമാണ്.



മലയാളികളുടെ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ ചിന്തകളിൽ വലിയ മാറ്റം വരുത്താൻ കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒന്നര പതിറ്റാണ്ടു കൊണ്ട് ശുചിത്വമിഷനു കഴിഞ്ഞു. സമ്പൂർണ്ണ ശുചിത്വ യജ്ഞത്തിനുള്ള കേന്ദ്രാവിഷ്കൃത പദ്ധതി നടപ്പാക്കുന്ന കേരള ടോട്ടൽ സാനിറ്റേഷൻ & ഹെൽത്ത് മിഷനും സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാരിന്റെ ഖരമാലിന്യ പരിപാലനത്തിന് നേതൃത്വം നൽകി വന്നിരുന്ന ഏജൻസിയായ ക്ലീൻ കേരള മിഷനും സംയോജിപ്പിച്ചാണ് 2008 ൽ സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ ശുചിത്വ മിഷൻ രൂപീകരിച്ചത്. മാലിന്യമുക്തകേരളം എന്ന ലക്ഷ്യം കൈവരിക്കുന്നതിന് തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളെ പ്രാപ്തമാക്കുകയാണ് ശുചിത്വ മിഷന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. ശുചിത്വ പരിപാലനത്തിന് അനുയോജ്യമായ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും, പദ്ധതികളും ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുകയും, അവ നടപ്പിലാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ആസൂത്രണവും പരിശീലനവും അടക്കമുള്ള നടപടികൾക്ക് മേൽനോട്ടം വഹിക്കുകയാണ് ശുചിത്വ മിഷൻ ചെയ്യുന്നത്. മാലിന്യസംസ്കരണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ പൊതുജനങ്ങളെയും, വിവിധ സന്നദ്ധ-സംഘടനകളെയും, പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങളെയും, സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളെയും പങ്കാളികളാക്കുകയും, അവരെ നേതൃത്വ

പരമായി ഏകോപിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുക എന്ന മർമ്മ പ്രധാന പ്രവർത്തനവും ശുചിത്വ മിഷൻ നിർവ്വഹിക്കുന്നു.

കേവലമായ ചട്ടപ്പടി മാലിന്യ നിർമ്മാർജ്ജനത്തിനപ്പുറം ശാസ്ത്രീയ- സുസ്ഥിര മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണത്തിനും, മാലിന്യത്തിന്റെ അളവ് കുറച്ചുകൊണ്ടു വരുന്നതിനും, ശുചിത്വമിഷന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിലൂടെ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്. മാലിന്യം എങ്ങനെ നിയന്ത്രിക്കണം അല്ലെങ്കിൽ എങ്ങനെ കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യണം എന്നതിന് വഴികൾ തീരുമാനിക്കുന്നതിന് ശുചിത്വ മിഷന് നിർണായക പങ്കുണ്ട്. ഉറവിടത്തിൽ തന്നെ മാലിന്യം സംസ്കരിക്കുന്ന കലയും, ശാസ്ത്രവും നമ്മെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുക മാത്രമല്ല മാലിന്യത്തെ സമ്പത്ത് ഉണ്ടാക്കാനുള്ള ഒരു വിഭവമാക്കി മാറ്റാമെന്നും ശുചിത്വ മിഷൻ പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

മാലിന്യത്തെ ജൈവ-അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങളായി വേർതിരിക്കുക, ജൈവ മാലിന്യം ഉറവിടത്തിൽ തന്നെ സംസ്കരിക്കുക, അജൈവ മാലിന്യം വിവിധ ഏജൻസികളിലൂടെ സംഭരിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് പ്രാഥമിക പ്രവർത്തനം. ഉറവിടത്തിൽ

വേർതിരിക്കുന്ന ജൈവമാലിന്യത്തെ വിവിധ കമ്പോസ്റ്റിംഗ് രീതികളിലൂടെ വളമാക്കി മാറ്റുക, ബയോഗ്യാസ് പ്ലാന്റിലൂടെ പാചകവാതകമാക്കി മാറ്റുക, വലിയ അളവിലുള്ള മാലിന്യത്തെ ഏയറോബിംഗ് കമ്പോസ്റ്റിംഗ് യൂണിറ്റിലൂടെയും, പോർട്ടബിൾ ബയോബിന്നിലൂടെയും സംസ്കരിക്കുക എന്നിവയാണ് രണ്ടാം ഘട്ടം. വലിയ തോതിലുള്ള ജൈവമാലിന്യം മറ്റ് ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കായി ശേഖരിക്കാനും, സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കാനും, പരിപാലിക്കാനും, മേൽനോട്ടം വഹിക്കാനും, വിവിധ ഏജൻസികളെയും ചുമതലപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ അവ എന്തുതന്നെ ആയാലും കൃത്യമായ ഇടവേളകളിൽ വിവിധ ഏജൻസികളിലൂടെ സംഭരിക്കുന്നു. സർക്കാർ സ്ഥാപനമായ ക്ലീൻ കേരള കമ്പനിയാണ് മുഖ്യ സംഭരണ ഏജൻസി. അംഗീകൃത സ്വകാര്യ ഏജൻസികളും രംഗത്തുണ്ട്. വീടുകളിൽ നിന്നും, സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും യൂസർ ഫീസ് നൽകി അജൈവ മാലിന്യം ശേഖരിക്കാൻ കൂടുതൽ ബ്രശീ മുഖേന ഹരിതകർമ്മസേനയെ നിയമവിധേയമായി തന്നെ സർക്കാർ



നിയമിച്ചു. മാലിന്യം വലിച്ചെറിയൽ മുക്തമാകുന്നതിന് പിന്നിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന പ്രധാന ശക്തിയായി ഹരിതകർമ്മസേന മാറുകയാണ്. അജൈവ മാലിന്യം ശേഖരിച്ച് തരംതിരിക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ പൊതുസ്ഥലങ്ങളും, വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളും, മാലിന്യമുക്തമാവുകയും, അതോടൊപ്പം ഹരിതകർമ്മ സേനാംഗങ്ങൾക്ക് വരുമാന മാർഗ്ഗവും ഉണ്ടാകുന്നു. 35351 ഹരിതകർമ്മ സേനാംഗങ്ങൾ 1034 തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിലായി സജീവമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. 53 ലക്ഷം വീടുകളിൽ ഇവരുടെ സേവനം എത്തുന്നു. 12676 മിനി മെറ്റീരിയൽ കളക്ഷൻ ഫെസിലിറ്റികളിലും, 1165 മെറ്റീരിയൽ കളക്ഷൻ ഫെസിലിറ്റികളിലും, 173 റീജിയണൽ റെസിഡ്യൂവർ ഫെസിലിറ്റിക

ളിലും മാലിന്യം ശേഖരിക്കുന്നു. കൂടാതെ 3800 ഓളം കമ്മ്യൂണിറ്റി ഫെസിലിറ്റികളും ഉണ്ട്. ഇവയിലൂടെ പ്രതിദിനം 173 ടൺ ജൈവ മാലിന്യമാണ് സംസ്കരിക്കുന്നത്. 12.5 ലക്ഷത്തോളം ഉറവിടമാലിന്യ ഉപാധികൾ വീടുകളിലും, സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിലുമായി സ്ഥാപിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ക്ലീൻ കേരള കമ്പനിയും, ഹരിത സഹായ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളും, ബിസിനസ്സ് ഏജൻസികളും അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ വാങ്ങുന്നു. ക്ലീൻ കേരള കമ്പനി മാത്രം പ്രതിമാസം 5000 ടണ്ണോളം അജൈവ മാലിന്യം ശേഖരിക്കുന്നു. ഇതിൽ 1200 ടണ്ണോളം പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാലിന്യം റിസൈക്ലിംഗിന് നൽകുന്നു. 100 ടണ്ണോളം ഇ-മാലിന്യവും ശേഖരിക്കുന്നു. 3000 ടണ്ണോളം അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ സ്വകാര്യ കമ്പനികൾ ശേഖരിക്കുന്നു. ഇതിനെല്ലാം പുറമെ 13000 സ്ക്രാപ്പ് ബിസിനസ്സുകാരും 140 റിസൈക്ലിംഗ് ഇൻഡസ്ട്രികളും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ വിപുലമായ മാലിന്യശേഖരണവും സംസ്കരണവും ആണ് നടക്കുന്നത്.

മാലിന്യം ഇന്ന് തൊഴിലും, വരുമാനവും നൽകുന്ന ഒരു ശ്രോതസ്സ് കൂടിയാണ്. ഹരിത കർമ്മസേനയ്ക്ക് ഈ വർഷം നവംബർ മാസം വരെ യൂസർ ഫീ ഇനത്തിൽ മാത്രം ലഭിച്ചത് 253 കോടി രൂപയാണ്. ശേഖരിക്കുന്ന അജൈവമാലിന്യം വിൽക്കുന്ന വരുമാനവും ലഭിക്കും. 10,000 രൂപ മുതൽ 60,000 രൂപ വരെ ഹരിത കർമ്മ സേനാംഗങ്ങൾക്ക് മാസവരുമാനം ലഭിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. സർക്കാർ അംഗീകരിച്ചിട്ടു

ള്ള കലണ്ടർ പ്രകാരം അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ ഹരിത കർമ്മ സേനയ്ക്ക് കൈമാറുന്നു എന്നും, ഹരിത കർമ്മ സേന അത് ശേഖരിക്കുന്നു എന്നും ഉറപ്പാക്കാൻ ഹരിത മിത്രം എന്ന ആപ്പും തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പ് ആവിഷ്കരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

അജൈവ മാലിന്യങ്ങളെ അസംസ്കൃത വസ്തുവാക്കി പുതിയ ഉല്പന്നങ്ങൾ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്ന നിരവധി സംരംഭങ്ങൾ ഇന്ന് കേരളത്തിലും, തമിഴ്നാട്ടിലുമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. സർക്കാരിന്റെ പ്രോത്സാഹനം ഇവർക്ക് ലഭിക്കുന്നു. Reduce, Re-use, Recycle എന്നതാണ് അജൈവമാലിന്യങ്ങളെ കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യുന്ന ആപ്തവാക്യം.

മാലിന്യസംസ്കരണം ഇന്നലെവരെ പൊതുജന പങ്കാളിത്തത്തോടെയുള്ള ജനകീയ പ്രവർത്തനമായിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ ഇനി മുതൽ മാലിന്യം കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യുന്നതിലെ അലംഭാവം ശിക്ഷാർഹമായ കുറ്റമായി മാറിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇതിനാവശ്യമായ നിയമനിർമ്മാണവും സർക്കാർ നടത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. പൊതുസ്ഥലത്തെ മാലിന്യനികേഷനും, മാലിന്യം കത്തിക്കൽ, നദികളിലും -ജലാശയങ്ങളിലും മാലിന്യം വലിച്ചെറിയൽ തുടങ്ങിയ നിയമലംഘനങ്ങൾക്ക് തടവും-പിഴയും വരെ ശിക്ഷ ലഭിക്കും. നിയമലംഘനങ്ങൾ അധികൃതരുടെ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെടുത്തുന്നവർക്ക് തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ പാരിതോഷികങ്ങളും നൽകും. തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണസ്ഥാപനങ്ങളെ പോലെ പൊതുജനങ്ങളും

ഇവിടെ മാലിന്യം നിക്ഷേപിക്കുന്നത് ശിക്ഷാർഹമാണ്





മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണത്തിന് ഉത്തരവാദിത്വം ഉള്ളവരാണ്. വീടുകളിലെയും, സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിലെയും മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണത്തിന് ചട്ടപ്രകാരമുള്ള സംസ്കരണ രീതി പാലിക്കുന്നുണ്ടെന്ന് ഉറപ്പ് വരുത്തേണ്ടതും, തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ കടമയാണ്. ചട്ടപ്രകാരം മാലിന്യസംസ്കരണം നടത്താത്തവർക്ക് പിഴ ചുമത്താനും, അവർക്കെതിരെ നിയമനടപടി സ്വീകരിക്കാനും തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്ക് അധികാരം ഉണ്ട്.

മാലിന്യമുക്തം നവകേരളം, കേരളത്തിന്റെ സുറിസം ഭൂപടത്തിലും വലിയ ചലനങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കും. കേരളം എന്നും വിദേശ സുറിസ്റ്റുകൾക്ക് പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട ഇടമാണ്. ടൈം മാഗസിൻ 2022 ൽ പുറത്തിറക്കിയ ലോകത്ത് കണ്ടിരിക്കേണ്ട 50 സ്ഥലങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടികയിൽ കേരളവും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. 2023 ൽ ന്യൂയോർക്ക് ടൈംസ് പുറത്തിറക്കിയ ലോകത്ത് കണ്ടിരിക്കേണ്ട സ്ഥലങ്ങളുടെ ലിസ്റ്റിൽ പതിമൂന്നാം സ്ഥാനത്തോടെ ഇന്ത്യയിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ഏക സംസ്ഥാനം കേരളം ആയിരുന്നു. ഈ നേട്ടങ്ങൾക്ക് അപ്പുറത്തേക്കും കേരളത്തിന്റെ സുറിസം വളരുകയാണ്. മാലിന്യമുക്തമായ സുറിസം ഡെസ്റ്റിനേഷനുകൾ നാളെ നമുക്ക് അഭിമാനിക്കാവുന്ന കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളായി മാറും.

മാലിന്യമുക്ത നവകേരളം ക്യാമ്പയിന്റെ ഒരു പ്രധാന അജണ്ടയാണ് സീറോ വേസ്റ്റ് സുറിസ്റ്റ് ഡെസ്റ്റിനേഷൻ. ഇതിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ വിനോദസ

ഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലെ മാലിന്യസംസ്കരണത്തിന്റെ നിലവിലെ അവസ്ഥ പഠനവിധേയമാക്കുകയും അതിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ ഓരോ വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രത്തിനും പ്രത്യേകം മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ പദ്ധതികൾ ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. എല്ലാ വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലെയും മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് നിലവിലുള്ള പോരായ്മകൾ പരിഹരിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങി കഴിഞ്ഞു. അടിസ്ഥാനസൗകര്യങ്ങളുടെ കുറവ് പരിഹരിച്ച് ശാസ്ത്രീയമായ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ രീതികൾ നടപ്പിലാക്കും. പൊതുശുചിമുറികൾ ഇന്ന് എല്ലാ വിനോദസഞ്ചാരകേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലും ഉണ്ട്. ഇതോടൊപ്പം വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ എത്തുന്ന സഞ്ചാരികളിൽ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണത്തിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യം മനസ്സിലാക്കി കൊടുക്കുന്നതിലുള്ള IEC (ഇൻഫർമേഷൻ, എജുക്കേഷൻ & കമ്മ്യൂണിക്കേഷൻ) പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും നടപ്പാക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ മാലിന്യമുക്തമാക്കുന്നതിനായി വിനോദ സഞ്ചാരവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന നിരവധി സംഘടനകളുടെ സഹകരണവും, പിൻതുണയും തേടിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

പരിസ്ഥിതിലോല പ്രദേശങ്ങളിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന വിനോദസഞ്ചാരകേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലെ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണത്തിന് പ്രത്യേക പരിഗണന നൽകുന്നു. ഗ്രീൻ പ്രോട്ടോക്കോൾ ഉറപ്പാക്കലും ഹരിതചെക്ക് പോസ്റ്റുകളും,

പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക്രഹിത പ്രവേശനവുമെല്ലാം ഇത്തരത്തിൽ നടപ്പിലാക്കിയ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളാണ്. സുസ്ഥിരം സുറിസം എന്ന ലക്ഷ്യത്തോടെ നവകേരളം കർമ്മ പദ്ധതിയുടെ ഭാഗമായി ഹരിതകേരള മിഷന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ ഹരിത സുറിസം പദ്ധതി നടപ്പാക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത 76 വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണം, ശുദ്ധമായ കുടിവെള്ള ലഭ്യത, ജലസ്രോതസ്സുകളുടെ സംരക്ഷണം, ഊർജ്ജ സംരക്ഷണം, കാർബൺ എമിഷൻ കുറയ്ക്കൽ, ജൈവ-വൈവിധ്യ സംരക്ഷണം എന്നിങ്ങനെ നീളുന്നു ഈ പദ്ധതിയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ.

കേരളം ഇന്ന് നഗര-ഗ്രാമ വ്യത്യസ്തമില്ലാതെ മാറിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. കേരളത്തിന്റെ പ്രകൃതിയും, കലയും, കാലാവസ്ഥയും മാത്രമല്ല ആഘോഷങ്ങളും, കൃഷിയും, സുഖചികിത്സയും വരെ സുറിസമായി മാറിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ഡെസ്റ്റിനേഷൻ വെഡിംഗും കേരളത്തിൽ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമായി. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സ്വന്തം നാടെന്ന പ്രചാരണത്തിനും, അതിഥി ദേവോ ഭവ: എന്ന ആതിഥ്യ മര്യാദയ്ക്കുമപ്പുറം വൃത്തിയുള്ള കേരളം സുന്ദര കേരളം എന്നതും ഒരു പ്രചാരണോപാധിയായി മാറുകയാണ് മാലിന്യമുക്തം നവകേരളം ക്യാമ്പയിൻ.

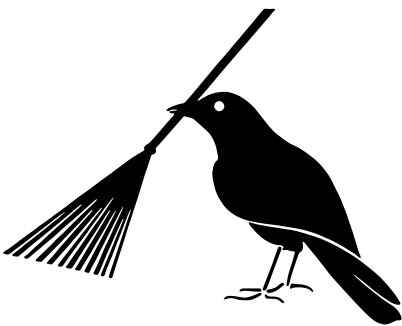
മുതിർന്ന മാധ്യമപ്രവർത്തകനും 'ദേശാഭിമാനി' മുൻ ലേഖകനുമാണ് അശോകൻ പള്ളിക്കൽ

മാലിന്യമുക്ത കേരളം ടൂറിസം മേഖലയ്ക്ക് മുതൽകൂട്ടാകും

എം.ബി. രാജേഷ്
തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി

‘മാലിന്യ മുക്തം നവകേരളം’ എന്ന കേരള സർക്കാരിന്റെ മുദ്രാവാക്യവും അത് ആസ്പദമാക്കിയുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും കേരളത്തിന്റെ വിനോദസഞ്ചാര മേഖലയുടെ വളർച്ചയ്ക്ക് വലിയ തോതിൽ സംഭാവന ചെയ്യുമെന്ന് തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി എം.ബി. രാജേഷ് പറയുന്നു. ‘സ്വാഗതിന്’ അനുവദിച്ച അഭിമുഖത്തിലെ പ്രസക്തഭാഗങ്ങൾ.

അഭിമുഖം: അശോകൻ പള്ളിക്കൽ



സ്വാഗതം: ‘മാലിന്യ മുക്തം നവകേരളം’ എന്നത് ഈ സർക്കാരിന്റെ മുഖ്യ മുദ്രാവാക്യങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നാണ്. ടൂറിസം മേഖലയ്ക്ക് ഗുണകരമാകാവുന്ന എന്തെല്ലാമാണ് ഈ മുദ്രാവാക്യത്തിലും അത് യാഥാർഥ്യമാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള പദ്ധതികളിലും അടങ്ങിയിട്ടുള്ളത് ?

തദ്ദേശസ്വയംഭരണ മന്ത്രി എം.ബി. രാജേഷ്: കേരളം വൈവിധ്യ സമ്പന്നമായ പ്രകൃതിസവിശേഷതകൾകൊണ്ട് ലോക വിനോദസഞ്ചാര ഭൂപടത്തിൽ ഇടം നേടിയ സംസ്ഥാനമാണ്. കടൽ, കായൽ, ഹൈറേഞ്ച്, കാട് എന്നിങ്ങനെ നീളുന്നു

ആ പട്ടിക. ഇവയെല്ലാം ഒത്തിണങ്ങി കാണപ്പെടുന്ന ലോകത്തിലെ തന്നെ ചുരുക്കം ചില സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നാണ് കേരളം. ഈ പ്രകൃതി ഭംഗി ആസ്വദിക്കാനും കേരളത്തിന്റെ കാലാവസ്ഥ അനുഭവിക്കാനുമായി കേരളത്തിലെത്തുന്ന സഞ്ചാരികൾക്ക് വൃത്തിയുള്ള വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളും പൊതുസ്ഥലങ്ങളുമാണ് ആവശ്യം. ഇത് ഉറപ്പാക്കുകയാണ് ‘മാലിന്യ മുക്തം നവകേരളം’ ക്യാമ്പയിൻ ലക്ഷ്യമിടുന്നത്. കേരളത്തിന്റെ വിനോദസഞ്ചാരമേഖലയുടെ വളർച്ചയ്ക്ക് ഈ ക്യാമ്പയിൻ നൽകുന്ന സംഭാവന വലുതായിരിക്കും.



“ ജൈവ മാലിന്യം ഉറവിടത്തിൽ സംസ്കരിക്കാനുള്ള സ്വന്തം സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിലും പൊതു ജൈവമാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ആവശ്യമുള്ള സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ അവയും ഉറപ്പാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. സാനിറ്ററി മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങളുടെ കുറവ് നിലവിലുണ്ട്.

കേരളത്തിലെ ടൂറിസം വികസനത്തിന് അനിവാര്യമായ പൊതു ഇടങ്ങളിലെ ശുചിത്വം ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നതിന് എന്തെല്ലാം പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളാണ് തദ്ദേശ ഭരണ വകുപ്പ് നടത്തുന്നത് ?

വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലെ അജൈവ മാലിന്യം ശേഖരിച്ച് പുനഃചംക്രമണം നടത്താനുള്ള സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ഇനി 35% വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ മാത്രമാണ് മെച്ചപ്പെടുത്താനുള്ളത് . ജൈവ മാലിന്യം ഉറവിടത്തിൽ സംസ്കരിക്കാനുള്ള സ്വന്തം സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിലും പൊതു ജൈവമാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ആവശ്യമുള്ള സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ അവയും ഉറപ്പാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. സാനിറ്ററി മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങളുടെ കുറവ് നിലവിലുണ്ട്. തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പിന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ നടത്തിയ അവസ്ഥാപഠനത്തിൽ നിന്നും കണ്ടെത്തിയ വിവരങ്ങളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ നടപടി സ്വീകരിക്കുകയും, ഇവ കണ്ടെത്താനുള്ള പരിശോധനകൾ നടക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

ഖര-ദ്രവമാലിന്യ നിർമ്മാർജ്ജനം വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ ശുചിത്വം ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നതിൽ നിർണ്ണായകമാണ്. ഇക്കാര്യത്തിൽ നമുക്ക് എന്താണ് ഇതുവരെ ചെയ്യാൻ

കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളത് ? ഇനിയെന്തൊക്കെ പദ്ധതികളാണുള്ളത് ?

2023 ഡിസംബറിൽ അവസ്ഥാപഠനം നടന്ന 498 വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ 130 കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ മാത്രമാണ് പൊതുശുചിമുറി സൗകര്യം മെച്ചപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ടതായുള്ളത്. 368 വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ മികച്ച പൊതു ശുചിമുറി സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ദ്രവമാലിന്യത്തിനും കക്കൂസ് മാലിന്യത്തിനും നിലവിൽ ഉള്ള പൊതു സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങളുടെ കുറവ് നികത്താനുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ പുരോഗമിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. വിനോദ സഞ്ചാര മേഖലയിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്ക് ദ്രവമാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണത്തിന് സ്വന്തം സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ നിലവിലുണ്ട്. പൊതു ദ്രവമാലിന്യസംസ്കരണത്തിനായി വിവിധ പ്രോജക്റ്റുകളിലായി സർക്കാർ 2300 കോടി രൂപ വകയിരുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇതിൽ 1696 കോടി രൂപ STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) യുടെയും FSTP

(Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant) യുടെയും നിർമ്മാണത്തിനായി വകയിരുത്തിയതാണ്.

ടൂറിസം മേഖലയിൽ സ്വകാര്യ സംരംഭകർ ഏറെ വന്നിട്ടുള്ള കാലമാണിത്. അവരുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തത്തോടെ സോളിഡ് വേസ്റ്റ് മാനേജ്മെന്റ് പദ്ധതികൾ ആവിഷ്കരിക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ അത് അവർക്കും സമൂഹത്തിനും വലിയൊരു നേട്ടമാകും. ആ ദിശയിലേക്ക് എന്തെങ്കിലും ആലോചനകളുണ്ടോ ?

സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ ശുചിത്വ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന 36 സ്വകാര്യ എജൻസികളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം നിലവിൽ ഉറപ്പാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഈ സ്വകാര്യ എജൻസികൾ പ്രതിമാസം 3500 ടൺ അജൈവ മാലിന്യമാണ് കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യുന്നത്. സ്വകാര്യ എജൻസികളെ കൂടുതൽ സജീവമായി ഈ രംഗത്ത് കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിനായുള്ള നടപടികൾ സ്വീകരിച്ചു വരുകയാണ്.

നമ്മുടെ ടൂറിസം പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ പരിസ്ഥിതിലോല പ്രദേശങ്ങളെ വലിയ തോതിൽ ആശ്രയിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. അവിടെ വലിയൊരു പ്രശ്നമാണ് ടൂറിസത്തിന്റെ ഫലമായി ഉൽപ്പാദിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന മാലിന്യങ്ങൾ. ഇത് സംബന്ധിച്ച് വ്യക്തമായ പ്രോട്ടോക്കോൾ, ചെയ്യാവുന്നവയും ചെയ്യാതെത്താവുന്നവയും സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള മാർഗ്ഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ, തുടങ്ങിയവ പരിഗണിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ ?

കേരളത്തിലെ വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ ചിലവ പരിസ്ഥിതിലോല പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലാണ് സ്ഥിതി ചെയ്യുന്നത് . മറ്റ് പ്രദേശങ്ങൾക്ക് നൽകുന്നതിലും കൂടുതൽ കരുതലും പരിഗണനയും ഈ പ്രദേശത്തെ വിനോദസഞ്ചാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് നൽകുന്നുണ്ട്. ഗ്രീൻ പ്രോട്ടോക്കോൾ ഉറപ്പാക്കിയുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ മാത്രമേ വിനോദസഞ്ചാര മേഖലയിൽ പാടുള്ളൂ എന്ന ഉത്തരവ് നിലവിലുണ്ട് .ഇതിനു പുറമെ വിനോദസഞ്ചാരവകുപ്പിന്റെ 'ഗ്രീൻ കാർപെറ്റ്', ഹരിത കേരളം മിഷന്റെ 'ഹരിത ടൂറിസം' എന്നീ പദ്ധതികളിലൂടെ സുസ്ഥിര വിനോദസഞ്ചാരം എന്ന ആശയമാണ് മുന്നോട്ട് വയ്ക്കുന്നത്. സമഗ്ര മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണം, ജല സംരക്ഷണം, പ്രകൃതി സംരക്ഷണം എന്നീ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻഗണന നൽകിയുള്ള വികസന പദ്ധതിയാണ് 'ഹരിത ടൂറിസം'. അജൈവ പാഴ്വസ്തുക്കളുടെ അളവ് കുറയ്ക്കുക എന്ന ലക്ഷ്യത്തോടെ ഗ്രീൻ ഡെസ്റ്റിനേഷൻ സർവീസ് സെന്ററുകളും പദ്ധതിയുടെ ഭാഗമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. വിനോദസഞ്ചാര വകുപ്പിന്റെയും ശുചിത്വ മിഷന്റെയും നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ ടൂറിസം ഡെസ്റ്റിനേഷൻ മാനേജ്മെന്റ് പ്രോട്ടോക്കോൾ ഫോർ വേസ്റ്റ് മാനേജ്മെന്റ് (ശുചിത്വ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് പാലിക്കേണ്ട നടപടിക്രമങ്ങൾ) തയ്യാറാക്കാനുള്ള നടപടി സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

കേരളത്തിലെ ഹോട്ടൽ വ്യവസായം ഖര മാലിന്യ മാനേജ്മെന്റിൽ വലിയ തോതിൽ പങ്കാളിത്തം വഹിക്കാൻ ഉത്തരവാദിത്തവും കൈപ്പടുമുള്ള മേഖലയാണ്. അവരുടെ സേവനം എങ്ങനെയാണ് ഫലപ്രദമായി ഉപയോഗിക്കാൻ കഴിയുക?

സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ വിവിധ സംഘടനകൾ നിലവിൽ 'മാലിന്യ മുക്തം നവകേരളം' ക്യാമ്പയിൻ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ വലിയ തോതിൽ പങ്കാളിത്തം വഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഫെഡറേഷൻ ഓഫ് കേരളാ ഹോട്ടൽസ് അസോസിയേഷന്റെയും ഹോട്ടൽ

ആൻഡ് റെസ്റ്റോറന്റ് അസോസിയേഷന്റെയും സഹകരണത്തോടെ എല്ലാ ഹോട്ടലുകളിലും മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പാക്കാനും, ആവശ്യമുള്ള സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ പൊതു മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ നിർമ്മിക്കാനുമുള്ള ശ്രമങ്ങൾ ആരംഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

പുനരുപയോഗ സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യകൾക്ക് ഏറെ സാധ്യതകളുള്ള കാലത്താണ് നാം ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. അത് നമുക്കെത്രമാത്രം പ്രാവർത്തികമാക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ട്/ കഴിയും ?

'മാലിന്യ മുക്തം നവകേരളം' ക്യാമ്പയിന്റെ ഭാഗമായിത്തന്നെ 'റെഡ്യൂസ്,റീയൂസ്,റീസൈക്കിൾ' എന്ന ആശയങ്ങൾ പ്രചരിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഉപയോഗം കുറയ്ക്കാനുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളാണ് ആദ്യഘട്ടം. പുനരുപയോഗം പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിന് പുനരുപയോഗ സാധ്യമായ ഉൽപ്പന്നങ്ങളുടെ തുടർ ഉപയോഗം പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്ന തരത്തിലുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ പലതും ഇപ്പോൾ തന്നെ നടക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഉദാഹരണത്തിന്, തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ വാർഷിക പദ്ധതികളിൽ ചേർത്ത് പൊതുപരിപാടികൾക്ക് ഉപയോഗിക്കാനായി പുനരുപയോഗ സാധ്യമായ പാത്രങ്ങളും ഗ്ലാസുകളും കുടുംബശ്രീ, യുവ സംരംഭകർ എന്നിവർ വഴി വിതരണം ചെയ്യാനുള്ള നടപടി സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. സർക്കാരിന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിലും അല്ലാതെയും നടക്കുന്ന പൊതുപരിപാടികൾ ഉത്തരത്തിൽ ഹരിത പ്രോട്ടോക്കോൾ പാലിച്ചാണ്

നിലവിൽ സംഘടിപ്പിക്കാനുള്ളത്. ഓണലോഷം, കേരളീയം, നവകേരള സദസ്സ് മുതലായ പരിപാടികളുടെ സംഘടനത്തിൽ ഇത്തരത്തിൽ റെഡ്യൂസ്, റീയൂസ് എന്നീ കാര്യങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻഗണന നൽകിയിരുന്നു.

ശുചിത്വം ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നതിനും പുനരുപയോഗ സാധ്യതകൾ തേടുന്നതിനും ഹോസ്പിറ്റാലിറ്റി മേഖലയിലും ടൂറിസം മേഖലയിലും പൊതുസമൂഹത്തിലും നടക്കുന്ന സ്വതന്ത്ര പരിശ്രമങ്ങൾ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും എന്തൊക്കെയാണ് ചെയ്യാനാവുക ? ഇത്തരം പരിശ്രമങ്ങളെ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിന് ഒരു റിവാർഡ് സംവിധാനം നമുക്ക് ആലോചിക്കാൻ കഴിയുമോ ?

മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ഗ്രീൻ സംരംഭകരുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളെ





'മാലിന്യമുക്തം നവകേരളം', രണ്ടാംഘട്ട ക്യാമ്പയിൻ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെ തുടക്കം

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സമഗ്ര മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണം, ജല സംരക്ഷണം, പ്രകൃതി സംരക്ഷണം എന്നീ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻഗണന നൽകിയുള്ള വികസന പദ്ധതിയാണ് 'ഹരിത ടൂറിസം'. അജൈവ പാഴ്വസ്തുക്കളുടെ അളവ് കുറയ്ക്കുക എന്ന ലക്ഷ്യത്തോടെ ഗ്രീൻ ഡെസ്റ്റിനേഷൻ സർവീസ് സെന്ററുകളും പദ്ധതിയുടെ ഭാഗമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. വിനോദസഞ്ചാര വകുപ്പിന്റെയും ശുചിത്വ മിഷന്റെയും നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ ശുചിത്വ മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് പാലിക്കേണ്ട നടപടിക്രമങ്ങൾ തയ്യാറാക്കാനുള്ള നടപടി സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.



പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കാൻ സർക്കാർ ഒരു പ്രത്യേക പരുപാടി വ്യവസായ വകുപ്പിന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ ആരംഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇതിലൂടെ കണ്ടെത്തിയ സംരംഭകരെ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കാൻ പ്രത്യേക ക്രമീകരണം വകുപ്പുമായി ചേർന്ന് നടത്തി വരുകയാണ്. ശുചിത്വ-മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ രംഗത്തേക്ക് കടന്നുവരുന്ന പുതിയ സംരംഭകരേയും സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യകളെയും പരമാവധി പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്ന നിലപാടാണ് നിലവിൽ

സർക്കാരിനുള്ളത്. തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പും വ്യവസായ വകുപ്പും യോജിച്ച് ഇത്തരത്തിൽ ഈ മേഖലയിലേക്ക് കടന്നുവരുന്ന സംരംഭകർക്ക് പിന്തുണ നൽകാനായി ഒരു പദ്ധതി തന്നെ ആവിഷ്കരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. കേരള സ്റ്റേറ്റ് പ്ലാനിംഗ് ബോർഡ് മെമ്പർ , KSIDC പ്രൊജക്ട് ഡയറക്ടർ, തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ വകുപ്പ് അണ്ടർ സെക്രട്ടറി എന്നിവരുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ ഒരു ടെക്നിക്കൽ കമ്മിറ്റി

രുപീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. മാലിന്യ സംസ്കരണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് ഊർജ്ജം നൽകാൻ ഹരിത സഹായ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്കും പാഴ്വസ്തു പുനഃചംക്രമണ സംരംഭങ്ങൾക്കും പിന്തുണ നൽകുന്നതിലൂടെ സാധിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ മേഖലയിൽ മികച്ച പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ കാഴ്ചവെക്കുന്ന സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്ക് പാരിതോഷികം നൽകുന്ന കാര്യവും പരിഗണനയിലുണ്ട്.



TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY FKHA BLAZES A NEW TRAIL

Sqn. Ldr K.B. Padmadas (Rtd.)
General Secretary, FKHA

Training and development programmes help employees learn and acquire new skills, expand their knowledge horizon and gain professional expertise so necessary to progress in their careers. Training benefits both the employees and employers: the former by helping them hone their skills and acquire new ones, the latter by creating a staff base that is capable of working at the cutting edge.

Organisations grow when their employees learn new skills and

innovative concepts, understand the changing operational dynamics of the industry and realises the value of teamwork. Training has a special place in the hospitality industry because this is a people-facing sector. The objective of staff training in the hospitality sector is, therefore, aimed not only to make them more productive and efficient, but also to equip them to deal with the guests efficiently.

Training impacts and improves guest service in all aspects. Many employers do not give much



importance to training due to various reasons, including lack of time, the costs involved, absence of proper resources, etc. Employees also are unable to dedicate time to attend training programmes as they would miss out on work when attending training sessions.

But these handicaps notwithstanding, training definitely provides both the hotel and the individual employee with benefits that make the cost, time and effort a worthwhile investment.

The importance of training in the hospitality industry can be summarised as:

- Addressing employee weaknesses and ensuring continuous improvement
- Instilling confidence in the staff and to boost their morale
- Addressing stagnation through skill development and by giving

them new responsibilities

- Standardisation of processes and procedures to get a structured output, which would ultimately result in better service
- Attracting and retaining talent, which is the end result of employee satisfaction
- Providing path for improvement and, in the process, enabling the employees to channelise their career growth and job advancement.
- Improving the overall work culture of the organisation

For the hotel industry in general, training has always remained an area of concern. After Covid-19, we had a drain of qualified staff to many other industries. This, in turn, resulted in the hotel industry suffering a terrible shortage of qualified and experienced staff. Though many hotels took steps to

impart training at their individual level, budgetary constraints, dearth of quality trainers, shortage of staff, the possibility of work schedules going haywire and challenges in time management put paid to their efforts.

Though major group hotels could afford to implement their own set of structured training programmes, standalone hotels had no such luxury. This resulted in many hotels facing severe talent crunch and operational issues.

Many hotels are mushrooming without any properly trained staff, which itself is dangerous as food handling and hotel rooms division operations require qualified and trained staff with proper standard operating procedures. Lack of clear understanding of these operational details can not only hurt the standard of service, but also prove life-threatening. One major area of



concern here is the possibility of food poisoning due to unhygienic handling.

All this underline the need for proper training in the hospitality industry. In every area—be it room cleaning, reception management or food and beverage production and service—training plays the major role in ensuring that the right processes, procedures and protocols are followed.

This is where the Federation of Kerala Hotels Association (FKHA) has blazed a new trail with the establishment of the FKHA Institute of Hotel Management (FKHA-IHM) in 2019. The FKHA-IHM was started with the intention of helping financially backward

youth
hotel

to get trained in
management.

Ever since its
inception,
it has
been
doing
this



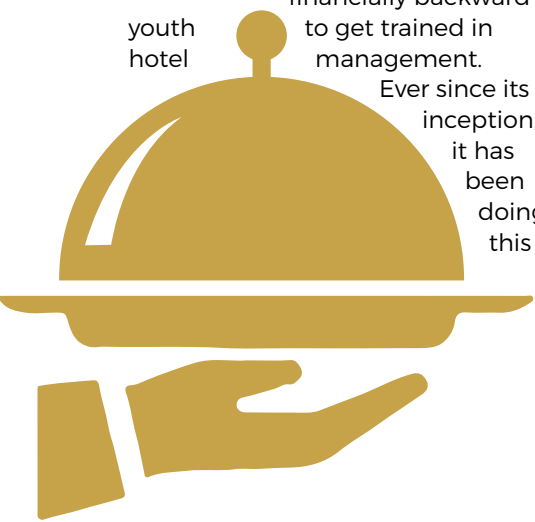
through an intensive One Year Diploma Programme in Hotel management. The Institute has already churned out more than 500 students for the hospitality industry from its four completed batches. The ongoing fifth batch, started in September 2023, has more than 250 students.

Training is imparted at 6 FKHA-IHM centres located in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode. FKHA has taken up this as a mission and a matter of corporate social responsibility of both the Association and its

individual members.

The basic qualification for enrolling for the course is SSLC. The course is offered free of cost. The students are also given free accommodation and food and a monthly stipend of Rs.4,000 during the duration of the course which involves both practical training and theory classes.

At end of the course, all students who clear the examination get guaranteed 100% placement at FKHA- member hotels. FKHA is able to do all these with the help and financial support of its member hotels. Training is given based on





a syllabus approved by the STED Council, which is a government approved body. It also monitors the classes and attendance, conducts the examinations and awards diploma certificates to successful candidates. STED Council is well known and its certificates are recognized all over India and various Gulf countries. FKHA-IHM also awards a certificate to all those who complete the course.

Another major initiative in training at the FKHA-member hotels is the Staff Empowerment Diploma Programme (STEP) started in November 2022. As many as 500 employees have derived the benefit of the course. Employees holding any position in the member hotels of FKHA, with a minimum qualification of SSLC (10th Std) and two years' experience can enrol for the programme.

The regular classes are conducted from 8 to 9.30 am and repeat classes from 3.30 to 5 pm, with online assistance from Monday to Thursday and a motivational / industry expert class every Friday. The timing of the classes and the additional expert interactions make this an ideal opportunity

for the professionally unqualified staff to get qualified without any hindrance to their income or busy job schedule.

The programme is conducted as a One Year Diploma Course at the end of which the candidates need to write the examination conducted by the STED Council. Successful candidates are awarded a Diploma in Hotel Management. The students can choose a textbook in English or Malayalam and the classes are also taken in a mix of Malayalam and English.

The examination for the first batch of STEP got over in December 2023 and 376 staff are awaiting results. Admission procedures for the second batch is on. Though the final results of the first STEP batch is yet to be announced, it is seen that they have taken the classes very seriously.

Candidates who have written the examination are highly motivated and are themselves encouraging more staff to join the second STEP batch which would commence soon. Once those who have appeared for the STEP examination emerges successful, the hotels that employ them would have more

qualified staff on their rolls, which will help not only to improve the standard of service but also the overall guest satisfaction index of the hotel.

Statutory processes like Star Classification and Re-classification mandates that a minimum number of the staff in a hotel should be professionally qualified. This has been a major challenge for hotels as many of them had experienced hands, but without the necessary professional qualifications. The STEP programme has proved to be a solution for this headache, that too without the employees moving out of the hotel or taking leave to get a professional hotel management qualification.

Training has a long-term effect and its proper and tailor-made implementation, like the STEP course, will be a major boost to the hospitality sector, which faces acute dearth of skilled and qualified personnel. With the FKHA-IHM equipping the existing staff with a Diploma in their chosen field of activity, there has been an all-round increase in satisfaction levels—at the staff level, at the managerial level and at the industry level.

AYODHYA

City of Spiritual Grandeur



Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is poised for what is being hailed as the 'biggest transformation in the history of the ancient city' and a major centre of pilgrim tourism in India.

Siji Nair





Ayodhya, an ancient city in India, exudes an atmosphere steeped in spiritual splendour. The air carries a palpable essence of piety and virtue, creating a timeless ambiance of divine love and fulfilment for its visitors.

Looking ahead to 2024, Ayodhya, situated in Uttar Pradesh, is poised for what is being heralded as the "biggest transformation in the history of the ancient city." Beyond the ongoing construction of the Ram Temple, a colossal investment of Rs 30,923 crore is earmarked for over 200 developmental projects.

The comprehensive redevelopment, following the Master Plan 2031,

will unfold over a decade with an investment exceeding Rs 85,000 crore, envisioning Ayodhya as a world-class city capable of hosting a daily footfall of around 3 lakh visitors post the Ram Temple consecration. The city's metamorphosis aims to position Ayodhya as a global tourism destination, embracing modern amenities.

The Maharishi Valmiki International Airport Ayodhya Dham, a testament to this vision, has been developed at a cost of over Rs. 1,450 crore. Adorned with colourful murals depicting stages of the Ramayana and Lord Ram's life, the airport is poised to connect Ayodhya with

major cities, facilitating the influx of pilgrims visiting the Ram Temple.

Recent inaugurations by the Prime Minister include the revamped Ayodhya Dham railway station, part of projects valued at over Rs. 11,000 crore. These projects encompass widened roads, a medical college, the Ayodhya bypass, solid waste treatment, and five parking and commercial facilities, signaling a holistic approach to Ayodhya's development.

A Tapestry of Religions

Ayodhya, historically a melting pot of religions, stands as a symbol of multi-religious coexistence. Temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras, and monasteries dot the landscape, bearing witness to India's diverse religious heritage. The city thrives as a pilgrimage centre, drawing devotees year-round.

Historical Significance

Nestled on the banks of the Sarayu River in Uttar Pradesh, Ayodhya covers an area of 250 km with a population of 55,890 as per the 2011 census. According to Hindu scriptures, Ayodhya is one of the seven sacred places. Its historical roots, dating back over 9,000 years, are linked to the Hindu deity Manu, who is believed to have founded the city.

Ayodhya's prominence in the Ramayana, serving as the capital of the ancient Kosala kingdom, adds to its historical significance. Lord Ram's birth in Ramkot further solidifies the city's importance in Hinduism. Ayodhya's history extends beyond Hinduism, featuring connections to Buddhism during Ashoka the Great's reign and Jainism, being the birthplace of five Tirthankaras.

Korean Connection

A unique link connects Ayodhya to South Korea through the legendary princess Heo Hwang-ok, believed to be from Ayodhya. In 1997, a Korean delegation visited Ayodhya,



strengthening cultural ties and proposing a memorial construction, later approved by the Uttar Pradesh government in 2016.

Weather and Accessibility

Ayodhya experiences cold winters and hot summers typical of central India. The ideal time to visit is from September to March. The city is accessible by road, rail, and air, with major airports in Ayodhya, Lucknow and Allahabad.

Places to Explore

Ayodhya boasts landmarks like Ramkot, Kanak Bhawan, Nageshwarnath Temple, Hanuman Garhi, and various Jain temples. Festivals like Ram Navami, Shraavan Jhula Mela, and Diwali add to the city's vibrant cultural tapestry.

Ayodhya is a city with a rich historical and religious significance, offering a plethora of sites for visitors.



Here are some more important places to visit in Ayodhya:

Treta Ke Thakur: This temple is dedicated to Lord Ram and is believed to be the spot where Lord Ram performed the Ashvamedha Yajna.

Swarg Dwar: Also known as the Gateway to Heaven, Swarg Dwar is believed to be the spot where Lord Ram ascended to heaven. Pilgrims visit this site to pay homage to the departure of Lord Ram.

Sita Ki Rasoi: Translated as Sita's Kitchen, this site is believed to be the kitchen of Mata Sita. Pilgrims believe that Sita used to cook food for Lord Ram here.

Mani Parbat and Chandrahswar Nath Mandir: These are ancient shrines located on the banks of the Sarayu River. The temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva and are considered highly sacred.

Kushadhwaj Ghat: This ghat is named after Lord Ram's son, Kush, and is believed to be the spot where he ruled after Lord Ram's departure.

Ram Janmabhoomi: This is the site where the Ram Janmabhoomi where Lord Ram is believed to



have taken birth. It holds immense historical and religious significance.

Shringi Rishi Ashram: This ashram is dedicated to Sage Shringi, who played a significant role in the Ramayana. It is believed that Sage Shringi conducted the Putrakameshti Yajna for King Dasharatha.

Kanak Bhawan: Apart from the Sone-ka-Mandir, Kanak Bhawan also houses the idols of Lord Ram and Sita wearing gold crowns, attracting devotees year-round.

Guftagu Park: Located on the banks of the Sarayu River, this park provides a serene environment for visitors to relax and enjoy the beauty of the surroundings.

Tulsi Samadhi Sthal: This is the place where the great Hindu poet-

saint, Tulsidas, is believed to have left his mortal coil. It is a significant site for those who admire his literary contributions.

Rajghat Dam: Situated on the banks of the Sarayu River, this dam offers a picturesque view and is a popular spot for picnics and relaxation.

Culab Bari: Built by Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula, Gulab Bari is a beautiful garden with fountains, pathways, and a mosque. It is a serene place to visit.

These sites collectively offer a comprehensive experience of Ayodhya's cultural, historical, and religious heritage. Visitors can explore the diverse facets of this ancient city, each site contributing to the rich tapestry of Ayodhya's history and spirituality.



Cultural Festivals and Fairs

Ayodhya indeed stands out as a city immersed in the vibrant colours of various festivals and fairs throughout the year, each adding a unique charm to the cultural tapestry of the region.

Visitors to Ayodhya have the opportunity to participate in and witness these joyous celebrations, gaining insights into the rich cultural and religious heritage of the city. The festivals and fairs in Ayodhya are not just events, they are an integral part of the city's identity and offer an immersive experience for both locals and tourists.

Here's a closer look at some of the key festivals and fairs celebrated in Ayodhya:

Ram Navami: Celebrated in March-April, it marks the birth anniversary of Lord Ram. Fasting, special poojas, decorated temples, Rath-yatra

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(chariot procession), and Ram Lila acts depicting the life of Lord Ram.

Ramlila: Enactment of Lord Ram's life based on Tulsidas' Shri Ramacharitmanas for 7 to 31 days during Ram Navami and Vijayadashmi celebrations.

The styles of the performance range from pantomimic, dialogue-based, operative to mandali-style, which the actors wear colourful costumes and give fascinating performances.

Shravan Jhula Mela: The festival happens during July-August, during the Hindu month of Sravan. The highlights of the festival include placing idols of Lord Ram, Lakshman, and Matha Sita on swings in temples, processions, and swinging idols from tree branches.

Sarayu Snan: Holy dip in the Sarayu River by thousands of devotees during the months of October-November, and also on every Amavasya and Purnima.

Parikramas: Circumambulations of divine spots, starting with a dip in the Sarayu River, are of different types such as Antargrahi Parikrama (shortest), Panchkoshi Parikrama (covers ten miles), and Chaturdashkoshi Parikrama, which would cover 28 miles and are conducted once a year during Akshainaumi.

Diwali: Celebrated to commemorate Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya after exile, the highlights of Diwali festivities are cleaning and decorating homes, lighting diyas, fireworks, family

feasts, and stage performances depicting the Ramayana.

Other Festivals and Fairs

There are also other festivals and fairs such as Bharat Kund Mela, Guptar Ghat Mela, Balark Ghat Mela, Suker Skshetra Mela, Makgaura Mela, etc. These events contribute to the festive atmosphere of Ayodhya, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and communal joy.

The festivals and fairs in Ayodhya showcase the city's unwavering connection to its historical and mythological roots. They also serve as platforms for artistic expression, religious fervour, and community bonding, making Ayodhya a destination where every season brings a new reason to celebrate.

LAKSHADWEEP

MAGICAL TAPESTRY OF THE SUN, SAND & THE SEA

Appearing like a string of pearls in the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep is a tapestry woven with 36 coral islands, 12 of which are inhabited. Lakshadweep, with its pristine beaches lapped by translucent waters, vibrant coral reefs teeming with marine life, and swaying coconut palms, is a heaven on earth.

Harisankar





Lakshadweep translates to 'a hundred thousand islands' in Malayalam and Sanskrit and even though only 10 are inhabited, the few that are open to tourists are coveted holiday destinations. Renowned for its crystal-clear waters and uncomplicated way of life, this Union Territory of India appeals to visitors from across the world.

Close your eyes. Let the incessant hum of city life fade, replaced by the rhythmic sigh of turquoise waves lapping against sugar-soft sand. Breathe in the salty kiss of the Arabian Sea, enjoy the sight of coconut palms swaying in the balmy breeze. Listen carefully and you will hear the waves roll indolently on to the clean shore. You are in Lakshadweep, a kaleidoscope of emerald lagoons, coral castles teeming with life, and skies where stars glitter like scattered diamonds.

Imagine an archipelago where 36 islands, each a brushstroke of exquisite beauty, paint a masterpiece across the Arabian Sea. Lakshadweep is not just a destination; it's an experience, a sensory symphony where turquoise waters whisper secrets to the shore, and the sun paints the sky in a riot of colour every evening.

Dive beneath the cerulean surface, and a kaleidoscope of colours explodes before your eyes. Vibrant coral gardens morph into underwater castles, their crevices

teeming with exotic fish darting like living jewels. Schools of silver scad shimmer in the sunlight, while graceful manta rays glide past, their wings casting fleeting shadows on the ocean floor. This is where the whispers of the coral become your soundtrack, and the ocean's secrets unfold like an ancient tale.

But Lakshadweep's magic extends beyond the waves. Step onto a beach where the sand feels like powdered pearls beneath your toes, and the sun warms your skin with a gentle caress. Coconut palms arch gracefully overhead, their fronds whispering secrets on the wind.

Build sandcastles that rival the coral palaces below, or let the waves wash away your worries with each rhythmic retreat. As the sun dips below the horizon, painting the sky in fiery hues, the islands come alive with a different rhythm.

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Renowned for its crystal-clear waters and uncomplicated way of life, this Union Territory of India appeals to visitors from across the world.

Kavaratti, the capital island, is a postcard-perfect paradise with pearly white beaches, vibrant coral reefs teeming with colourful fish, and quaint villages where traditional Lakshadweep life unfolds. One of the key tourist attractions here is the Ujra Tad, a 16th-century lighthouse, and the Marine Aquarium, showcasing the wonders of the underwater world.

Agatti, the gateway island, is a haven for water sports enthusiasts. You can glide across the crystal-clear lagoon on a kayak, feel the thrill of windsurfing, or try your

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hand at scuba diving amidst shipwrecks and vibrant coral formations. The Agatti Island Beach Resort, nestled amidst swaying palm trees, offers the perfect retreat to soak in the island's tranquillity.

Amini, the island of tranquillity, is a nature lover's paradise. You can hike through lush coconut groves, spot exotic birds flitting through the trees, and unwind on secluded beaches where the only sound is the gentle whisper of the waves. Visit the Amini Island Lighthouse, offering breathtaking panoramic views, or explore the vibrant coral reefs teeming with marine life.

Kadmat, the island of adventure, is a magnet for thrill-seekers. Kadamat beckons you to kayak through mangrove forests, trek through sand dunes, or try your hand at kitesurfing in the lagoon's turquoise waters. The Kadmat Island Beach Resort, with its traditional Lakshadweep architecture, blends seamlessly with the island's natural beauty.

Kalpeni, the island of lagoons, is a kaleidoscope of marine wonders, where you can dive into the crystal-clear lagoons teeming with colourful fish, explore coral gardens pulsating with life, or simply relax on pristine beaches where the sand feels like powder under your toes. Don't miss the Tilakkam and Pitti Islands, two tiny islets offering stunning views and secluded beaches.

These are just a few of the treasures waiting to be discovered in the Lakshadweep Islands. Each island has its own unique charm, offering a different facet of paradise to explore. So, pack your bags, grab your sunscreen, and get ready to experience the magic of Lakshadweep!

No journey to the Lakshadweep is complete without indulging in the local flavours, and Lakshadweep's cuisine is a poem written with fresh seafood, fragrant spices, and the bounty of the coconut palm.



A RADIANT TRANSFORMATION



Lakshadweep spans 32 sq km, comprising 12 atolls, three reefs, five submerged banks, and ten inhabited islands. These islands, situated 220 to 440 km from Kochi in Kerala, boast natural beauty, sandy beaches, diverse flora and fauna, and a tranquil lifestyle.

Recognized as a tourist destination since 1974, the islands attract visitors year-round, offering activities like scuba diving, wind surfing, snorkeling, water skiing, and more. The government actively promotes tourism, particularly in Bangaram and Kadmat islands, with Bangaram poised as a potential international tourist hotspot.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated and dedicated development projects having an outlay of Rs 1150 crore in Kavaratti, Lakshadweep. These projects span various sectors, including technology, energy, water resources, healthcare, and education.

The Prime Minister acknowledged ecologist Ali Manikfan's contributions to Lakshadweep's conservation, praising his research and innovation.

Lakshadweep, he said, has a major role to play in India's development and international tourism. Blue-flag

beaches, water villa projects, and the increasing popularity of cruise tourism offered rich potential for promoting tourism in the islands, he said.

The Prime Minister announced the completion of the Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fiber Connection (KLI-SOFC) project, ensuring 100 times faster Internet for Lakshadweep residents. The fast internet connectivity would help enhance government services, medical treatment, education, and digital banking, bolstering Lakshadweep's potential as a logistics hub, he said.



Sample the melt-in-your-mouth Kilanji, a delightful dish consisting of sweet and watery coconut milk, banana, and jaggery. It resembles a crepe, comprising rice and eggs. This dish is often featured on the table during weddings and other festive gatherings.

Pamper your tastebuds with Mus Kavaab, a classic Minicoy meal. This dish comprises tuna curry infused with an array of spices. Mus, a boneless fish, is marinated in a mixture of coconut, turmeric, chilli powder, coriander powder, cardamom, and cloves. These marinated chunks are then cooked with onions, tomatoes, and curry leaves. It is best enjoyed by pairing the hot tuna curry with some rice.

Or go for Maas Podichathu, tuna sliced into small chunks and blended with shredded coconut, turmeric powder, chilli powder, diced onions, and minced garlic. Dried tuna, referred to as maasu, is a speciality of the Lakshadweep islands. It pairs wonderfully with

plain rice, making it a renowned local dish.

Kavaratti has fashioned its unique variant of the Malabar biryani, which goes by the name Kavaratti biryani. It is made with local spices, fresh seafood and fragrant rice. Coconut, coriander and saffron given the biryani its special flavour.

Kadalakka is a delectable local dessert, made of Bengal gram, and is often referred to as kadalakka pola or kadala pathil. Lentils and eggs are gently cooked in a pan to form a moist and nutritious cake with a liberal helping of cashews and raisins.

Lakshadweep is more than just beaches and turquoise waters. For the adventurer, kayaks beckon, promising journeys through emerald lagoons where the silence is broken only by the splash of paddle and the cry of seabirds. Scuba divers can explore shipwrecks draped in coral, their nooks teeming with marine life, or marvel at the underwater ballet of

manta rays in the open ocean.

For those seeking serenity, yoga sessions on the beach at sunrise, as the first rays of the sun kiss the waves, offer a chance to connect with your inner self and the rhythm of nature.

And for the romantics, stargazing on a moonless night, with the Milky Way blazing overhead, is an experience that will leave you breathless.

Lakshadweep is not just a destination; it's a feeling, a whisper of a dream woven from sun-kissed sand, turquoise waters, and the soul-stirring rhythm of the ocean. It's a place where time slows down, where worries melt away in the sun's embrace, and where the whispers of the coral become your lullaby. So, pack your bags, open your heart, and let Lakshadweep paint your soul with the colours of paradise.

Harisankar is a Thiruvananthapuram based freelance journalist

INDIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY POISED FOR ROBUST GROWTH

Indian hotel industry is likely to report double-digit revenue growth, says a report by credit rating agency ICRA.

The Indian hotel industry turned the Covid-19 curve and is poised for robust growth both in terms of occupancy and revenue during fiscal 2024, according to the latest report by ICRA, the independent professional investment information and credit rating agency.

The industry's growth prospects are supported by sustenance of domestic leisure travel, demand from meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE), and business travel, along with an increase in foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs), according to the ICRA report.

ICRA estimates pan-India premium hotel occupancy to be at 70-72% in FY2024 and 72-74% in

FY2025, after recovering to 68-70% in FY2023. Pan-India premium hotel average room rate (ARR) is expected to be Rs. 6,300-6,400 in FY2024 and Rs. 6,400-6,600 in FY2025. While the occupancy is expected to be at decadal highs, the RevPAR is likely to remain at a 15-20% discount in FY2024 compared to the FY2008 peak.

ICRA expects the industry to report revenue growth of 12-15% in FY2024 and 6-8% in FY2025.

The sustenance of a large part of the cost-optimisation measures undertaken during the Covid-19 period, along with operating leverage benefits have resulted in significant improvement in operating margins for hotel companies, the report says.



It further states that companies have increased their usage of renewable power while pass-through of the cost inflation and strict control on fixed costs increase have also supported margins. Asset-light expansions have been margin-accretive for larger hotel chains.

ICRA's sample, comprising 12 major hotel groups, is expected to report operating margins of 27-30% for FY2024 and 26-28% in FY2025, against 20-22% during the pre-Covid period. While there would be some moderation in margins in FY2024 and FY2025 compared to FY2023 levels when there was a sharp increase in some cost heads like refurbishment and maintenance, they are likely to be higher than the pre-Covid levels.

The demand uptick has resulted in a pick-up in supply announcements and commencement of deferred projects in the last 15-18 months. However, supply, which is expected to grow at a CAGR of 4.5-5.0% over the medium term, would lag demand, facilitating a structural upcycle in the industry. Thanks to the industry uptick, lenders and investors are keen on funding hotel projects at present.

The healthy business accruals have led to improvement in credit profile as well, in several companies. This has resulted in upgrades exceeding downgrades in FY2023 and YTD FY2024. About 94% of ICRA's ratings are on stable outlook at present, back to pre-Covid levels.

Vinutaa S., Vice President and Sector Head – Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said, "Demand is expected to remain strong across markets in FY24 as consumer sentiments continue to be healthy and corporate performance is stable. Hotel-specific demand, would, however, depend on location, competition, and other property-related dynamics."

"Further, domestic tourism would be the prime driver, although FTAs are likely to pick up in H2 FY24. Mumbai and Delhi, being gateway cities, are likely to report occupancy north of 75% in FY24, benefitting from transient passengers, business travellers, and MICE events. While Pune and Bengaluru could be laggards compared to other markets, they are also expected to witness significant improvement in FY24 compared to FY23," Vinutaa adds.

"ICRA expects the uptick in earnings and cashflows to support the capital structure going forward. The asset monetisations, if any, would largely pertain to non-revenue generating assets. Debt metrics for hoteliers are expected to be better than pre-Covid levels in FY24. The extent of improvement in return on capital employed (RoCE) would, however, depend

on expansion strategy and could be constrained by the high capital cost of new properties owing to increased land and construction cost, in case of asset-heavy expansion," says Vinutaa.

The report says that healthy demand uptick has resulted in a pick-up in supply announcements and the commencement of deferred projects in the last 12-15 months. However, supply, which is expected to grow at a CAGR of 3.5-4% over the medium term, would lag demand.

Land availability issues currently constrain supply addition in premium micro-markets in metros and larger cities. Addition to premium hotel supply in these areas is largely on account of rebranding or property upgradation and greenfield projects are largely in suburbs. Sizeable supply announcements are seen in tier-II leisure, business, and religious destinations. There is also an increase in per room construction cost by 20-25%, with cost inflation, compared to pre-Covid levels, it adds.

Given the positive outlook for hotel industry in the medium term, SAMHI Hotels, the owner of the largest number of Marriott and IHG -operated hotels in India, had recently launched its IPO, which garnered decent response from investors. The company raised Rs. 1,370 crore from its public offering at a price band of Rs. 119-126. This was the second largest IPO in the hotels & resorts sector after Chalet Hotels' Rs. 1,641 crore offering in February 2019. Before Chalet, Lemon Tree Hotels had raised Rs. 1,039 crore via the IPO route in April 2018.

Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, which owns and operates hotels under the 'The Park' brand, is also coming with ₹1,050 crore IPO, comprising fresh equity issue of Rs. 650 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs. 400 crore by promoters.

UNLOCKING COASTAL CHARM

Kerala's ambitious beach tourism plans have been set afloat with various initiatives including installation of Floating Bridges in several districts.

Staff Writer



Kerala, with its extensive 580-km coastline featuring some of the most picturesque beaches in India, is gearing up to harness its beach tourism potential through various initiatives including the installation of floating bridges.

The government's strategy involves connecting tourist destinations along the vast coastal stretch spanning nine out of its 14 districts, all of which are blessed with long coastlines. Seven of these have already come up.

Floating bridges are but one part of these initiatives being spearheaded by Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas, who has been pushing coastal tourism development in a big way.

The Department of Tourism set up the first floating bridge in the State at Beypore in Kozhikode district

way back in 2022. It proved an instant rage among both the local populace as also visitors to the port city.

The 100 metre-long and 3-metre-wide bridge is made of high-density polyethylene that floats in water. It is strengthened with 31 anchors each weighing 100 kilograms. At the end of the bridge is a broad platform which gives the visitors a pulsating outer sea experience.

Encouraged by the success of the floating bridge at Beypore, similar floating bridges were installed in places such as Muzhuppilangad in Kannur district, Chavakkad in Thrissur district, Tanur in Malappuram district, Kuzhuppilly Beach in Ernakulam district, the Alappuzha town beach and Papanasam in Thiruvananthapuram district.

The floating bridges are the outcome of a collaborative effort involving the Department of Tourism, District Tourism Promotion Councils, Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society, and the local self-government institutions where they are located.

The Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society (KATPS) was tasked with drawing up the safety and security guidelines for the projects and conducting a detailed survey to find suitable locations in each district for setting up these bridges.

The floating bridges have been installed after ensuring that the locations are ideal for safe enjoyment of the blue expanse from the bridges simultaneously by people in batches.

വെള്ളാർ ആർട്സ് & ക്രാഫ്റ്റ്സ് വില്ലേജ് ഇവിടെ വിരിയുന്നു കലകരുടെ സൗഖ്യവർണശോഭ





മേരി സാമുവൽ

നഗരത്തിരക്കിൽ നിന്നകലെ മനോഹരമായി രൂപകല്പന ചെയ്തെടുത്ത ഈകലാകാരന്മാരുടെ ഗ്രാമത്തിൽ നൃത്ത-സംഗീത പരിപാടികളുടെ അലയൊലികൾക്ക് അവസാനമില്ല. തൊട്ടരികെ താളം തുള്ളുന്ന അറബിക്കടലിലെ ഓളങ്ങൾ പോലെ വർഷം മുഴുവനും അവ അനുസ്മൃതം തുടരുന്നു. സങ്കല്പിക്കാനാവാത്തത്ര വൈവിധ്യവും പേറി കേരളീയ കരകൗശല നിർമ്മാണത്തിൽ പ്രഗല്ഭരായ ഒരു കുടും കലാകാരന്മാർ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന തനതു കരകൗശല വസ്തുക്കൾ അവരിൽ നിന്നും നേരിട്ടു വാങ്ങിക്കാവുന്ന ഒരിടം കൂടിയാണിത്.

മേല്ക്കരുമയില്ലാത്ത വിശാലമായ തുറസ്സിൽ, പ്രകൃതി ഒരുക്കിയ ആഫി തിയേറ്ററിൽ നക്ഷത്രങ്ങളെയും കണ്ട് കടല്ക്കൊറ്റുമേറ്റ് ഡി.ജെ. പാർട്ടിയിൽ പങ്കെടുത്തിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ വരു തിരുവനന്തപുരം വെള്ളാറിലുള്ള ആർട്സ് & ക്രാഫ്റ്റ്സ് വില്ലേജിലേക്ക്. ലോകോത്തര കലാകാരന്മാർ ഉൾപ്പെടെ എത്തുന്ന വൈവിധ്യമാർന്ന കലാവിഭാഗമാണ് ഇവിടെ ആസ്വാദകർക്കായി എന്താണെന്ന് എല്ലാ മാസങ്ങളിലും ഒരുങ്ങുന്നത്.

ക്രിസ്മസ് പുതുവത്സര ആഘോഷങ്ങളുടേ ഭാഗമായുള്ള 'എപ്പിലോഗ്' ഇത്തവണ നാല് ദിവസമായാണ് അരങ്ങേറിയത്. പരിമള ഷെയിന്സ്, ഇന്റാച്ചി, ഇന്റാച്ചിംഗ്, മേരി ആൻ ബാൻഡുകളുടെ സംഗീതപരിപാടി, തീർത്ഥ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച നൃത്താധിഷ്ഠിത നാടകമായ സ്പോർട്സ്, സൂര്യ കൃഷ്ണമൂർത്തി ഒരുക്കിയ മെഗാ ഷോ 'അഗ്നി' എന്നിവ നിറഞ്ഞ സദസീനുമുന്നിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കപ്പെട്ടു. പ്രശസ്ത സോളോ വയലിനിസ്റ്റ് ആയ സെനിയ ഡുബ്രോസ്കായ, പിയറനനിസ്റ്റ് ജസ്റ്റസ് കോൺസ്റ്റാന്റിൻ ഫ്രാൻസ്, വീത്രാഗ് ഗോപി എന്നിവർ ചേർന്നവതരിപ്പിച്ച പാശ്ചാത്യ സംഗീതപരിപാടിയും തദ്ദേശീയരായ ഒരു കുടും കലാകാരന്മാർ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച വാദ്യമേളങ്ങളുടെ സമന്വയമായ റിഥം വിത്താട്ട് ബോർഡോഴ്സും ആസ്വാദകരെ ആവേശക്കൊടുമുടിയിലെത്തിച്ച കലാവിഭാഗങ്ങളായിരുന്നു. 'എപ്പിലോഗ്'യുടെ കൂടി ഇവിടത്തെ കലാപരിപാടികൾ അവസാനിച്ചു എന്നു കരുതരുത്. നഗരത്തിരക്കിൽ നിന്നകലെ മനോഹരമായി രൂപകല്പന ചെയ്തെടുത്ത ഈ കലാകാരന്മാരുടെ ഗ്രാമത്തിൽ നൃത്ത സംഗീതപരിപാടികളുടെ അലയൊലികൾക്ക് അവസാനമില്ല. തൊട്ടരികെ താളം തുള്ളുന്ന അറബിക്കടലിലെ ഓളങ്ങൾ പോലെ വർഷം മുഴുവനും അവ അനുസ്മൃതം തുടരുന്നു. സങ്കല്പിക്കാനാവാത്തത്ര വൈവിധ്യവും പേറി കേരളീയ കരകൗശല നിർമ്മാണത്തിൽ പ്രഗല്ഭരായ ഒരു കുടും കലാകാരന്മാർ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന തനതു കരകൗശല വസ്തുക്കൾ അവരിൽ നിന്നും നേരിട്ടു വാങ്ങിക്കാവുന്ന ഒരിടം കൂടിയാണിത്.

രാജ്യാന്തര ഇൻഡി മ്യൂസിക് ഫെസ്റ്റിവൽ (ഐ.ഐ.എം.എഫ്), വനിതാ ദിനത്തിനോട് അനുബന്ധിച്ച് 'ഡ' വിമൺസ് വീക്ക്, കേരളീയ കലാമേളയും ശില്പശാലയും ഉൾക്കൊള്ളിച്ചുള്ള 14 ദിവസത്തെ 'മെയ്ത്താരി', അന്തർദേശീയ നൃത്തോത്സവം, പരിസ്ഥിതി സൗഹൃദ കൈത്തറി ഫാഷൻ ഷോ ആയ 'എനാഷൻ', വാലന്റൈൻസ് ദിനത്തിൽ സംഘടിപ്പിക്കുന്ന 'ഡെൻ അണ്ടർ ദി സ്റ്റാർസ്', ശിശുദിനത്തിൽ കുട്ടികൾക്കായുള്ള ചിത്രരചനാ മത്സരം 'അപ്പൂപ്പന്താടി' എന്നിവ അവയിൽ ചിലതാണ്.

ഇതുകൂടാതെ പ്രതിമാസ കലാപരിപാടിയായ സെന്റർ സ്റ്റേജും മറ്റൊരു ആകർഷണീയ കലാവിഭാഗമാണ്. ഇതിനും പുറമേ ചിത്ര-ശില്പ പരിശീലന കളരികൾ, കലാസാംസ്കാരിക സമ്മേളനങ്ങൾ, എന്നിവയ്ക്കൊക്കെ വേദിയാവാറുണ്ട് ഇവിടം.

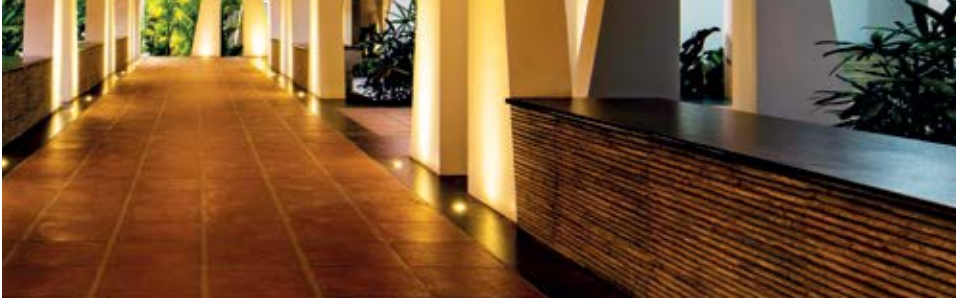
കലാപരിപാടികൾക്കു മാത്രമുള്ള സ്ഥലമാണിതെന്നു കരുതിയാൽ തെറ്റി. കേരളീയ കരകൗശല നിർമ്മാണത്തിൽ പ്രഗല്ഭരായ ഒരു കുടും കലാകാരന്മാർ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന തനതു കരകൗശല വസ്തുക്കൾ അവരിൽ നിന്നും നേരിട്ടു വാങ്ങിക്കാവുന്ന ഒരിടം കൂടിയാണിത്. തദ്ദേശീയ കലാകാരന്മാർ കയ്യാടുന്ന പതിഞ്ഞ ഒരു ആഭരണപ്പെട്ടിയോ ഒരു കൈത്തറിവസ്ത്രമോ വീടനകത്തിന് പ്രാവശ്യം പകരുന്നൊരു ദാരുശില്പമോ അങ്ങനെ എന്തും ഇവിടെ കിട്ടും.



കരിങ്കൽ ക്വാറി അടങ്ങുന്ന എട്ടര എക്കറോളം വരുന്ന തരിശുഭൂമിയെ അതിന്റെ സ്വാഭാവികമായ ചരിവു കയറ്റുവുമൊക്കെ അതു പോലെ നിലനിർത്തി കേരളീയ മാതൃകയിലുള്ള കെട്ടിട സമുച്ചയം ഒരുക്കി മാറ്റിയെടുത്തിരിക്കുകയാണിവിടെ.

കരിങ്കൽ ക്വാറി അടങ്ങുന്ന എട്ടര എക്കറോളം വരുന്ന തരിശുഭൂമിയെ അതിന്റെ സ്വാഭാവികമായ ചരിവു കയറ്റുവുമൊക്കെ അതുപോലെ നിലനിർത്തി കേരളീയ മാതൃകയിലുള്ള കെട്ടിട സമുച്ചയം ഒരുക്കി മാറ്റിയെടുത്തിരിക്കുകയാണിവിടെ. കലാസൃഷ്ടികൾ പ്രദർശിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന രണ്ടു നിലയിലുള്ള വിശാലമായ എമ്പോരിയവും നിർമ്മാണശാലകളും ഓപ്പൺ സ്റ്റേജ്, ആംഫി തിയറ്റർ, ഭക്ഷണശാല, ഓഡിറ്റോറിയം, എന്നിവയെല്ലാം അടങ്ങിയതാണ് ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജ്.

ദേശീയപുരസ്കാരങ്ങൾ നേടിയ ദാരുശില്പികളുടെ കലാവൈഭവം തിളങ്ങുന്ന ശില്പങ്ങൾ, കൊമ്പിലും ചിത്രയിലും തൊണ്ടിലും തീർത്ത കരകൗശലവസ്തുക്കൾ, തുകൽ



വാദ്യോപകരണങ്ങൾ, കൈത്തറി വസ്ത്രങ്ങൾ, മിനിയേച്ചർ പോട്ടറി എന്നിങ്ങനെ പെരുമയും വൈവിധ്യവും നിറഞ്ഞ നൂറുകണക്കിന് വസ്തുക്കളിൽ നിന്നും നിങ്ങൾക്കിഷ്ടമുള്ളവ തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കാം. പ്രദർശനശാലയോടു ചേർന്നുള്ള സ്റ്റുഡിയോകളിൽ മിക്ക കലാരൂപങ്ങളുടെയും നിർമ്മാണവും കാണാം. കരകൗശല വിദഗ്ദ്ധരുടെ സംസാരിച്ചും അവരുടെ നിർമ്മാണ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ കേട്ടും ഓരോ കലാരൂപത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേക മനസ്സിലാക്കിയും തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കാം എന്നുള്ളതാണ് ഇവിടത്തെ മറ്റൊരു പ്രത്യേകത. സമ്മാനങ്ങൾ കസ്റ്റമൈസ് ചെയ്തു വാങ്ങാനുള്ള സൗകര്യവുമുണ്ട്.

മുപ്പത് സ്റ്റുഡിയോകളും അവയോടു ചേർന്നുള്ള പണിശാലകളിലുമായി എഴുന്നൂറുവരോളം കരകൗശലവിദഗ്ദ്ധർ ഇവിടെ അമ്പതിലേറെ ഇനം പരമ്പരാഗത കലാസൃഷ്ടികൾ ഒരുക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഇവയെല്ലാം കണ്ടുതീരാൻ തന്നെ ഒരു ദിവസമെടുക്കും. തടിയിലും ആനക്കൊമ്പിലും കമനീയശില്പങ്ങൾ തീർക്കുന്ന കെ.ആർ. മോഹനന്റെ പണിശാലയിൽ കയറിയൽ പിന്നെ തിരിച്ചിറങ്ങാൻ മടിക്കും. കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാരിന്റെ ശില്പഗുരു പുരസ്കാരം രണ്ടുതവണ സമ്പന്നമാക്കിയ മോഹനന് വയസ് എഴുപത് കഴിഞ്ഞ ജിലും അദ്ദേഹം നിർമ്മിക്കുന്ന ശില്പങ്ങളുടെ ചാരുതയ്ക്കൊരു

കുറവും വന്നിട്ടില്ല. അറുപത് വർഷത്തെ ശില്പസപര്യയിൽ ഏറെ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കപ്പെട്ട ദശാവതാരം, നടൻ മോഹൻലാലിനായി നിർമ്മിച്ച വിശാലരൂപം എന്നിവയടക്കം മോഹനന്റെ എണ്ണം പറഞ്ഞ കലാസൃഷ്ടികൾ ഒട്ടേറെയാണ്.

പരമ്പരാഗത ആഭരണപ്പെട്ടിയായ നെട്ടൂർപ്പെട്ടിയെ വ്യത്യസ്തമാക്കുന്നത് അതിലെ ചെമ്പിൽ തീർത്ത അലങ്കാരപ്പണിയും കൈകൊണ്ടു വരച്ചുചേർക്കുന്ന ചിത്രരൂപങ്ങളുമാണ്. കൈത്തഴക്കം വന്ന കലാകാരന്റെ ദിവസങ്ങളും മാസങ്ങളും നീണ്ട സൂക്ഷ്മമായ അദ്ധ്വാനമാണ് ഓരോ ആഭരണപ്പെട്ടിയെയും മനോഹരമായ കലാസൃഷ്ടിയായി മാറ്റുന്നത്. വീട്ടിത്തടിയിലൂടെ വേദിൽ കടഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്ന വ്യത്യാസ്യതയിലുള്ള ചെപ്പ്, ആമാടപ്പെട്ടി, കാൽപ്പെട്ടി തുടങ്ങിയവയും ഇവിടെ ലഭ്യമാണ്.



സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ ഏറ്റവും നല്ല കരകൗശല തൊഴിലാളിക്കുള്ള വ്യവസായ വാണിജ്യ വകുപ്പിന്റെ അവാർഡ് അടക്കം നിരവധി പുരസ്കാരങ്ങൾക്ക് അർഹനായ വി.വി. സുരേഷും സഹോദരനാണ് ഈ സ്റ്റാളിന് നടത്തുന്നത്. വെള്ളാർ ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജിലെ സ്റ്റുഡിയോയിലൂടെ നെട്ടൂർപ്പെട്ടിയെ കുറിച്ച് കൂടുതൽ ആളുകൾ അറിഞ്ഞുതുടങ്ങിയതാണ് സുരേഷിന്റെ അനുഭവം. ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജിലെ കലാപരിപാടികൾ കാണാനായി വരുന്ന ആളുകൾ സ്റ്റുഡിയോ സന്ദർശിക്കുക പതിവാണ്. അത്തരത്തിൽ നല്ല ഓർഡറുകളും ലഭിക്കാറുണ്ടെന്ന് സുരേഷ് പറഞ്ഞു. അതല്ലാതെ കേരളീയ കരകൗശല വസ്തുക്കൾ സമ്മാനമായി നൽകാനും വീട് അലങ്കരിക്കാനുമെക്കെയായി വാങ്ങാൻ വരുന്നവരുമുണ്ട്. ഇത്തരം ആവശ്യക്കാരുടെ 'ഗോ ടു' ഇടമായി ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജ് മാറിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു.

കരകൗശല വികസന കമ്മീഷന്റെയും നാളികേര വികസന ബോർഡിന്റെയും ദേശീയ പുരസ്കാരങ്ങൾ നേടിയ കലാകാരനായ എ. പ്രതാപന്റെ മാധ്യമം തൊണ്ടോടു കൂടിയ തേങ്ങയാണ്. ക്ലോക്കും ഗണപതിയും ലാമ്പ് ഷെയ്ഡുകളുമെന്നുവേണ്ട നാളികേരത്തോളെങ്കിൽ നിന്ന് രൂപംകൊണ്ട കരകൗശല വസ്തുക്കളുടെ നീണ്ട നിര തന്നെയാണ് പ്രതാപന്റെ സ്റ്റുഡിയോയിൽ. ഇന്ത്യയിലും വിദേശത്തുമായി പലതവണ കലാപ്രദർശനങ്ങൾ നടത്തിയിട്ടുള്ള പ്രതാപന്റെ സൃഷ്ടികൾതേടി വിദേശികളുടെ കൈമുളുവർ ഇവിടെ എത്താറുണ്ട്.

പതിമൂന്നാമത്തെ വയസിൽ ഈ മേഖലയിൽ എത്തിയതാണ് പ്രതാപൻ. ഇപ്പോൾ അറുപത് വയസു കഴിഞ്ഞു. ഇതിനോടകം ഒരുപാട് യാത്രകൾ ചെയ്തു. ഇനി വിശ്രമിക്കാമെന്നു തീരുമാനിച്ചപ്പോഴാണ് വെള്ളാർ ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജിലേക്ക് ക്ഷണം കിട്ടിയത്. ഇപ്പോൾ മുഴുവൻ സമയവും ഇവിടത്തെ സ്റ്റുഡിയോയിൽ തന്നെയാണ്. തന്നെപ്പോലെത്തുള്ള കലാകാരന്മാർക്ക് വലിയ പ്രോത്സാഹനവും പിന്തുണയുമാണ് ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജ് നൽകുന്നതെന്ന് പ്രതാപൻ പറയുന്നു. ചെറിയൊരു ആവശ്യം ഉന്നയിച്ചാൽ പോലും അത് കൃത്യമായി അന്വേഷിച്ച് നടപ്പാക്കി തരുന്നവരാണ് ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജ് നടത്തിപ്പുകാർ.

കളിമണ്ണിൽ തീർത്ത ചായക്കല്ലുകളും കുജയും ലാമ്പ് ഷെയ്ഡും നമുക്ക് പരിചിതമാണ്. എന്നാൽ കൈവള്ളയിലൊതുങ്ങുന്ന കളിമൺപാത്രങ്ങളോ? മിനിയേച്ചർ പോട്ടറി എന്ന കൗതുകം കാണണമെങ്കിൽ ഇവിടത്തെ കളിമൺ സ്റ്റുഡിയോയിൽ കയറിയാൽ മതി. ഒരിഞ്ചു വലിപ്പത്തിൽ





ലക്ഷണമൊത്ത ചായക്കോപ്പകളും പാത്രങ്ങളും ഇവിടെ നിന്നും സ്വന്തമാക്കാം.

ഇനി കൈത്തറി വിഭാഗത്തിലേക്കു വന്നാൽ കേരളത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ പ്രദേശങ്ങളിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന തരികൾ പ്രദർശിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതു കാണാം. ബാലരാമപുരത്തിനു പുറമേ പ്രശസ്തമായ ചേന്ദമംഗലം, കുത്താമ്പുളളി എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നുള്ള തരികളാണ് ഇവിടെ പ്രദർശിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇവിടെ നെയ്തെടുത്ത സാരിക്കൾ, മുണ്ടുകൾ, ഡിസൈനർ കൈത്തറി വസ്ത്രങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയും വാങ്ങാം. വിവേഴ്സ് വില്ലേജ് എന്ന പേരിൽ കൈത്തറി വസ്ത്രങ്ങളുടെ വില്പന നടത്തുന്നത് ബിഗ്ബോസിലൂടെ പ്രശസ്തയായ ശോഭ വിശ്വനാഥാണ്.

ഒരുകാലത്ത് വീടുകളിലെ ചില്ലലമാരുകളിൽ പതിവുകാഴ്ചയായിരുന്ന കുറുത്തു തിളങ്ങുന്ന കിളികളെ ഓർമ്മയില്ലേ? പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് കളിപ്പാട്ടങ്ങളുടെ വരവോടെ വീടിനു പുറത്തായ അവരെ ഇവിടെ വീണ്ടും കണ്ടു മുട്ടാം. കാളക്കൊമ്പിനെ കിളിയും മയിലും മരച്ചില്ലയുമൊക്കെയായി രൂപപ്പെടുത്തിയെടുക്കുന്ന ഈ കരകൗശലവിദ്യ അന്യം നിന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. ചിരട്ടയും തൊണ്ടും കൊണ്ടുള്ള കരകൗശലരൂപങ്ങൾ, ചുരൽ ഫർണിച്ചർ, തുകൽവാദ്യോപകരണങ്ങൾ, മീൻ ചെതുവലിൽ നിന്നുള്ള മാലകളും കമ്മലുകളും എന്നിങ്ങനെ ഒന്നിനൊന്നു വ്യത്യസ്തമായ അലങ്കാരവസ്തുക്കളുടെയും കരകൗശല സൃഷ്ടികളുടെയും പ്രദർശനശാലകളാണ് ഇവിടെ സന്ദർശകരെ കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇവയ്ക്കു പുറമേ ഇന്ത്യയിലെ വിവിധ ഗ്രാമങ്ങളിലെ കലാകാരന്മാരിൽ നിന്നും നേരിട്ടു ശേഖരിച്ച കലാസൃഷ്ടികളും ഇവിടെ എമ്പോറിയത്തിൽ നിന്നും വാങ്ങാം. ഇതിനോടു ചേർന്ന് ഒരു ആർട്ട് ഗാലറിയുമുണ്ട്. പ്രശസ്തരും പ്രശസ്തിയിലേക്ക് നീങ്ങുന്നവരുമായ കലാകാരന്മാരുടെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ചിത്രങ്ങളുടെയും ശില്പങ്ങളുടെയും പ്രദർശനങ്ങൾ ഇവിടെ പതിവാണ്. ഷോപ്പ് ചെയ്തു തളർന്നാൽ വിശ്രമിക്കാനും വിശപ്പുകൊണ്ടും നല്ലൊരു ഭക്ഷണശാലയും ഇവിടെയുണ്ട്.



ഭംഗിയായി പരിചരിച്ച് സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്ന പുനോട്ടവും തണൽമരങ്ങളും ദീപവിതാനം കൊണ്ട് മോടിപിടിപ്പിച്ച കുളവും ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജിനെ ആകർഷണീയമാക്കുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളാണ്.



ഭംഗിയായി പരിചരിച്ച് സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്ന പുനോട്ടവും തണൽമരങ്ങളും ദീപവിതാനം കൊണ്ട് മോടിപിടിപ്പിച്ച കുളവും ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജിനെ ആകർഷണീയമാക്കുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളാണ്. കുന്നിന്ദുകളിലെ സൺസെറ്റ് പോയിന്റിൽ നിന്നാൽ അറബിക്കടലിന്റെ ചേതോഹരദൃശ്യവും ആസ്വദിക്കാം.

പാരമ്പര്യ-കരകൗശല കലാകാരന്മാരുടെ ഉന്നമനത്തിനായി രൂപം നൽകി ഊരാളുകൾ ലേബർ കോൺട്രാക്ട് കോ-ഓപറേറ്റീവ് സൊസൈറ്റി പരിപാലിക്കുന്ന ഈ ക്രാഫ്റ്റ് വില്ലേജ് വികസനത്തിന്റെ അടുത്ത ഘട്ടത്തിലേക്ക് കടക്കുകയാണ്. ഇൻഡോർ-ഔട്ട്ഡോർ വിനോദങ്ങളും വൈജ്ഞാനിക വിനോദങ്ങളും ഉൾപ്പെടുന്ന ഗെയിം സോൺ, പെർഫോമിങ്ങ് ആർട്സിന്റെ പരിശീലനത്തിനായുള്ള

ട്രെയിനിങ്ങ് അക്കാദമി, വാങ്ങാനും ഇരുന്ന് വായിക്കാനും സൗകര്യമുള്ള പുസ്തകശാല തുടങ്ങിയവ വൈകാതെ തന്നെ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാവും.

കളരിവിദഗ്ദ്ധ പത്മശ്രീ മീനാക്ഷിയമ്മയുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ കെ.എ.സി.വി. കളരി അക്കാദമിയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം ഇവിടെ ആരംഭിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞു. ബാക്കിയുള്ള വിക

സന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ കൂടി പൂർത്തിയാവുന്നതോടെ അന്താരാഷ്ട്രതലത്തിൽ ശ്രദ്ധാകേന്ദ്രമാകുന്ന കരകൗശല-കലാ-സാംസ്കാരിക കേന്ദ്രമായി ആർട്സ് & ക്രാഫ്റ്റ്സ് വില്ലേജ് മാറുകയായി.

തിരുവനന്തപുരം ആസ്ഥാനമാക്കി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന സാമൂഹ്യ പ്രവർത്തകയാണ് മേരി സാമുവൽ.

THRILLS UNLIMITED

Heart-pounding adventure awaits thrill-junkies visiting Kerala this year

March
14-17

PARAGLIDING FESTIVAL
Wagamon (Idukki)

March
29-31

SURFING FESTIVAL
Varkala (Thiruvananthapuram)

April
26-28

MTB KERALA
Mananthavady (Wayanad)

July
25-28

MALABAR RIVER FESTIVAL
Kodenchery (Kozhikode)

Wish to go beyond the well-trodden paths and set your adrenaline racing while in Kerala? The best time of the year to do that is from March to July this year. Kerala is about to ignite your adventurous spirit with a quartet of pulse-pounding festivals in the coming months.

Brace yourself for an epic expedition, as the Tourism Department gears up to catapult the State onto the global adventure tourism map. Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas has just unveiled a thrilling calendar of events poised to tap into the burgeoning \$1 trillion adventure tourism market, projected to grow by 20% by 2032.

This burgeoning trend, particularly amplified by the post-pandemic desire for authentic experiences, presents a golden opportunity for Kerala, with its diverse and breathtaking landscapes.

From towering mountains to verdant jungles teeming with vibrant life, and from sun-kissed beaches lapped by the incessant waves of the Arabian Sea, to intricate networks of backwater canals, Kerala has everything that goes to make an adventure wonderland. Kerala's geography is a symphony of adventure waiting to be orchestrated.

This State Tourism Department's ambitious initiative isn't just about adrenaline rushes; it's about unlocking the hidden potential of Kerala's diverse ecosystems. It's about responsible tourism that celebrates the state's natural wonders while promoting sustainable practices. It's about creating unforgettable memories that bind you to the spirit of Kerala, long after the adrenaline ebbs.

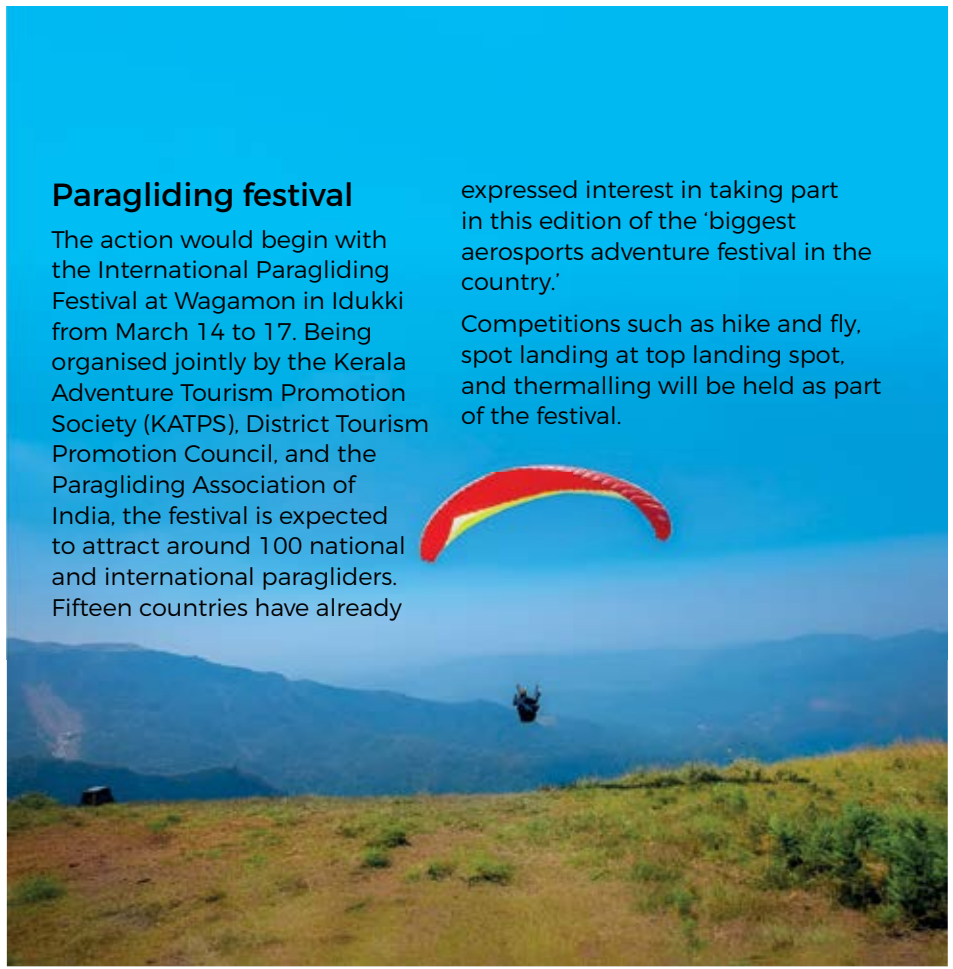
The State's pristine beaches have long been a magnet for tourists. The Tourism Department's effort now is to take the thrill-addicts to the exhilarating frontiers of adventure in the mountains, in the beaches and the rivers.

Paragliding festival

The action would begin with the International Paragliding Festival at Wagamon in Idukki from March 14 to 17. Being organised jointly by the Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society (KATPS), District Tourism Promotion Council, and the Paragliding Association of India, the festival is expected to attract around 100 national and international paragliders. Fifteen countries have already

expressed interest in taking part in this edition of the 'biggest aerosports adventure festival in the country.'

Competitions such as hike and fly, spot landing at top landing spot, and thermalling will be held as part of the festival.



Surfing festival

The beach destination of Varkala near Thiruvananthapuram will host the International Surfing Festival, the first national surfing championship of the 2024 calendar, from March 29 to 31.

Surfers from the country's eastern and western coasts will compete in various categories at the festival, aimed at turning Kerala into a prominent surfing destination. Both amateurs and experts will attend the event, which will help develop Varkala beach further, Mr. Riyas has said.

MTB Kerala

The seventh edition of the mega mountain biking event MTB Kerala 2024 will be held at the Priyadarshini Tea Plantation in Mananthavady, Wayanad, from April 26 to 28.

The cycling track where the event would be held stretch for 5 km through the plantation at an altitude of 3,000 ft. The cross-country contest includes terrain such as mud, rocks, and water.

Cyclists from 25 countries are expected for the event. Amateur competitions will be held for cyclists from India, and the winners will get an opportunity to compete with international cyclists.



Malabar river Festival

The Malabar River Festival 2024 will be held at Kodencherry in Kozhikode from July 25 to 28

The event, which has already become a rage with white-water kayaking enthusiasts from different parts of the country and the world, is being organised with technical

support from the Indian Kayaking and Canoeing Association (IKCA).

This is the 10th edition of the festival. The years gone by has made a strong imprint in the adventure sports calendar in the country and gone a long way to promote white-water kayaking and adventure water sports in south India.

Competitions such as slalom and downriver time trail will be held on the Chalipuzha and the Iruvazhinji puzha, with the IKCA in charge of safety arrangements.

POWERING PASSION!

International Sports Summit Kerala 2024 January 23-26, Sports Hub, Thiruvananthapuram



Kerala is all set to pioneer the nation's first Sports Economy initiative with the International Sports Summit Kerala 2024.

To be held at the Sports Hub, Kariavattom, Thiruvananthapuram, from January 23 to 26, the event is an ambitious attempt at focusing Sports, Fitness and Wellness.

Around 25,000 persons from different related arenas, 10,000 delegates, 1000 investors, 100 plus speakers, 100 plus startups are expected to participate in the main event and 100 microevents being organised part of the summit.

This four-day extravaganza will not only unveil the unique prospects

and opportunities in this sector but will also delve into global advancements, celebrate vibrant sports activities, and showcase diverse indigenous sports from across India, with a special focus on the gems of Kerala.

The objective is to explore multidimensional aspects of Sports, Fitness & Wellness sectors, including Infrastructure, Manufacturing & Retail, Events & Avenues, Health & Well-being, Medicine, Curriculum, Skill Development, Tourism, IT & Startups, Ayurveda & Wellness, Sociology & Civic Pride, Psychology & Mental Health, Engineering & Technology, Management, Media, Branding & Advertising and Statistics & Data Analysis.

Heli Tourism takes wings in Kerala



Kerala has taken tourism to the skies with the launch of a Helicopter Tourism venture and promise of a policy declaration soon to regulate the Heli Tourism activities in the State.

The first Heli Tourism venture in the State was launched by Tourism Minister P.A. Mohammed Riyas, who said the Tourism Department would soon come out with measures to nurture Heli Tourism

into a major vertical of tourism promotion activities in the State.

The proposed helicopter tourism policy, he said, would usher in tourism-friendly regulations and public-private partnership in the sector. Once Heli tourism picks up, tourists would be able to save on commuting time to major tourist destinations.

Helicopters can provide quick air connectivity from Kochi to major

tourist spots such as Idukki and Wayanad so that the tourists can spend quality time in the State. Efforts would be made to rope in private players to set up helipads at major tourism destinations, he added.

The Minister also launched a micro website which would provide tourists information about the travel packages on offer in the State and facilitate advance helicopter ride bookings.

The helicopters would be operated subject to the security criteria of the Directorate of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS). EOIs were being invited from potential operators who would then be required to submit their detailed proposals, he said.

Tourism Secretary K. Biju, Director P.B. Nooh, Additional Director Prem Krishnan and Kerala Tourism Infrastructure Chairman S.K. Sajeesh were also present.



NO TIME FOR GYM? GO FOR BWE!

Harisankar

All exercise is beneficial. But even when stacked up against other types of workouts, Body Weight Exercise has a lot to offer. Not only does it provide an excellent workout, but it can also help you overcome some common excuses for avoiding exercise, like “I don’t have time to go to the gym” and “I don’t have space for a stationary bike at home.”

According to Harvard Medical School, all you have to do is move your body. If you have just 15 minutes to spare, you can help build a healthier, younger body!

What is Body Weight Exercise?

The health and fitness experts at Harvard Medical School have perfected workout routines that

use your own body weight to strengthen your whole body — routines that offer a wealth of better health and more pep in your step.

You can do these feel-younger exercises at home and adjust them to your fitness level. And there’s positively no equipment necessary to get great results.

Here’s a closer look at some of the pluses.

It couldn’t be more convenient

No matter where you are, you’ve got your body, so you can start exercising anywhere, anytime—in your bedroom when you wake up, in the kitchen while you’re waiting for water to boil, in your hotel room when travelling. That makes it easy to find the time.

Right price

With body-weight exercise, there's nothing to buy other than a pair of shoes. You don't need stylish clothing. You don't even need a yoga mat, much less an expensive gym membership, although you can certainly do these workouts at the gym, too. You might want a few props, such as a chair, bench, or counter to modify some moves, but these are all items that you have on hand.

Low intimidation factor

You can do these exercises solo. You don't have to walk into a gym full of buff exercisers and complicated-looking weight machines that require adjustments and may still not fit you properly.

It's effective

Research published in the journal *Physiology and Behaviour* has found that, as a form of resistance training, body-weight exercise helps build muscle "independent of an external load." But it does more than that. When Polish researchers looked at the effects of 10 weeks of body-weight exercises on various physical fitness parameters in a small group of young women, they found improvements in seven out of nine of the parameters.

The biggest gains were in aerobic capacity, with a 33% improvement. Muscle endurance, particularly in the core, increased by 11%, while lower-body power posted a 6% gain. Even flexibility was better after the training.

Don't have to do a lot

You don't necessarily have to do a lot of it. While it's good to meet the physical activity guidelines, smaller amounts of body-weight exercise can also deliver results.

In a small study of active people in their 60s, Japanese researchers found that a workout consisting of eight simple lower-body exercises increased the participants' muscle strength and power by about 15% after 10 months. That may not sound like much, but during this stage of life, strength and power are often declining. What's more, the participants achieved these gains by doing only six workouts a month.





“Functional” exercise

Most body-weight exercises work multiple muscles at once rather than training an isolated muscle or muscle group, as many exercise machines and dumbbell exercises do. Therefore, body-weight exercises are considered more functional, using more muscles and joints at a time, engaging balance and, and mimicking everyday activities.

Adjust it to your fitness level

It may not be obvious how to do this at first. When you’re using your body as the weight, you can’t just remove 10 or 20 pounds as you can with machines or dumbbells. But there are ways to modify moves to decrease or increase the resistance. You can adjust your body position—for example, doing push-ups against a wall rather than the floor—or you can change the number of times you repeat an exercise or modify the pace you’re working at.

Sure, it’s good for your health

Literally thousands of studies have shown that the more you move, the lower your risks for heart disease, diabetes, obesity, multiple types of cancer, joint pain, and Alzheimer’s disease. Exercise can also lift your mood, reduce your stress level, and improve your sleep. Body-weight exercise is no exception.

So, what are you waiting for? For the next New Year resolution to get you moving? No, next New Year is far away! Your health option is very much in your body! Go for it!

Don’t tarry, try these Body Weight Exercises from today!

Chest

1. Push-Up

Start on your hands and knees on a yoga mat on the floor, with your hands resting slightly wider than the width of your shoulders. Straighten your legs out behind

you so you’re being supported by your hands and the balls of your feet. Keep your body in a straight line from the top of your head to your heels (holding your head up in line with your spine). Bend your elbows and lower your chest until it nearly touches the mat. Pause and then push yourself back up to the starting position. If that’s too difficult, complete the push-up with your knees on the floor. One set is 12 repetitions.

2. Push-Up Shuffle

Complete a push-up (either on your knees or with your legs extended behind you, depending on your fitness level). Then, keep your core engaged and shuffle your right hand and right foot a step to the right side. Bring your left hand and foot to meet them. Complete another push-up there. Return to centre and repeat on the opposite side. One set is five shuffles in each direction.

3. Isometric Chest Squeeze

Stand with your hands in front of you with a 90-degree bend in your elbows. Hold your hands together and squeeze your chest as hard as you can. Hold the tension for up to 30 seconds and release; that's one repetition.

Arms

1. Triceps Dip

Sit in front of a bench or coffee table or at the end of a couch with your legs extended out in front of you away from the furniture. Position your hands on top of the furniture behind you with your hands about shoulder-width apart and your fingertips pointing toward your body. Straighten your arms and pull your body up so it is hovering over the floor. Then engage your triceps muscles as you bend your elbows until they're at about a 90-degree angle. Press down from your hands and straighten your arms to return to the starting position. You should be supporting most of your body's weight in your arms to get the greatest benefit from the move. To make the exercise easier, keep your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. One set is 12 repetitions.

2. Plank Up-and-Downs

Get into a plank position on the floor: Your hands should be on the mat with your shoulders directly above them, legs extended straight back behind you, toes on the mat, and your body forming a straight line from top of head to heels. (If that's too difficult, you can keep your knees on the floor.) Lower your left elbow down to the mat and then lower your right elbow down to the mat so you're now in a forearm plank. Keep your core engaged and your body in a straight line. Push up and straighten your right arm. Then straighten your left arm as well. Repeat for 30 seconds, switching off which arm goes first; that's one set.

3. Triangle Push-Ups

Settle into a plank position but place your hands close together under your chest and form a triangle with your index fingers and your thumbs (your thumbs should be in a straight line forming the bottom side of the triangle). Lower your chest toward the floor as if you were doing a regular push-up, keeping your elbows close to your body. Pause at the bottom and then push off the floor to return to the starting position. Modify by completing the push-up with your knees on the floor or by moving your hands slightly wider than the triangle shape. One set is 12 repetitions

Burpee Can be broken down into five different movements



Count 1

Drop into a squat position with your hands on the ground



Count 2

Kick your feet back, placing your body into a plank position while keeping your arms extended



Count 3: From this position, do a push-up*



Count 4

Jump your feet back into the squat position.



Count 5

Jump up from the squat position.

*The push-up can be eliminated to create a four-count BURPEE

Back

1. Superman Y

Lie face down on a mat with your arms extended in a Y position overhead and your legs are extended directly behind you on the mat. Using your back and shoulders, lift your chest and arms off the mat. Hold and then lower into the starting position. One set is 15 repetitions.

2. Bird Dog

Position yourself on your hands and knees on your mat with hands beneath your shoulders and your knees beneath your hips. While keeping your core engaged and stable, raise your right arm straight in front of you and extend your left leg straight out behind you, reaching both away from the body at the same time so both are parallel to the floor. Hold, engaging the hamstrings and glutes; then bring your arm and leg back to centre. Repeat with your left arm and right leg. Complete 15 repetitions on each side for one set.

3. Superman T

Lie face down on a mat with your arms extended out to your sides so your body is in a T position. Using your back and shoulders, lift your chest and arms off the mat. Hold and then lower into the starting position. One set is 15 repetitions.

Core and Abdominal Muscles

1. Plank

Start on the mat on your hands and knees with your hands beneath your shoulders. Extend your legs behind you so your toes are pressing into the floor to stabilize your body. Keep your neck in an unstrained, neutral position with your eyes focused on a spot on the floor about a foot in front of you. You should feel your legs and glutes working to hold your body steady. Your body should be forming a straight line from the top of your head to your heels. Hold for 30 seconds, or as long as you can manage; that's one set.

2. Bicycle Crunches

Lie on your back with your arms bent and your hands touching the back of your head (but not fully supporting it). Pull your knees up and into your chest as you lift your shoulder blades off the floor. Extend your right leg straight out in front of you (making a 45-degree angle with the floor), while

simultaneously twisting your upper body toward your left knee, so your right elbow is extending toward your left knee. Hold and then repeat in the opposite direction with your left leg extended and your left elbow twisting to meet your right knee, for a total of 30 seconds for one set.

3. Side Plank

Lie on your side with your forearm on the floor at a 90-degree angle pointing away from you on the mat (chest and upper body are lifted off the mat) and your legs extended so your body is in a straight line on the mat. Stack your feet on top of each other and lay your top arm on your waist. (If that's too difficult, place your upper leg on the floor in front of the



lower leg.) Lift your hips off the floor while holding your core tight. Your body should form a straight line from top of head to heels. Lift your top arm straight up into the air so it's perpendicular to the floor. Hold for 30 seconds or more. To make it more challenging, lift your top leg up and down as you hold the plank. Switch sides and repeat; that's one set.

Legs

1. Jump Squats

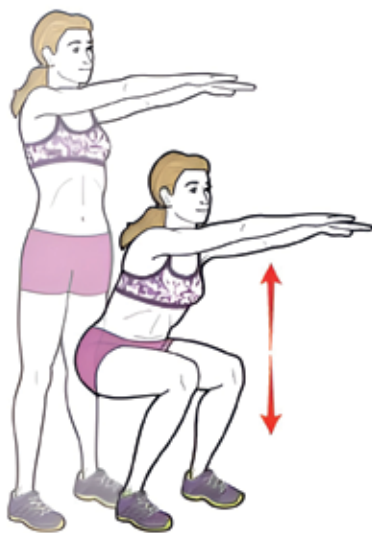
Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hinge from your hips and bend your knees to lower into a squat position, as if you're sitting down in a chair. Keep your weight in your heels and your chest up throughout the movement. Pause at the bottom, then drive through the heels as you jump straight into the air. Land softly on your feet and immediately lower into a squat to repeat. One set is 10 reps.

2. Reverse Lunge

From a standing position with feet together, step your right foot directly behind you. Lower your hips and drop your right knee so it's bent at a 90-degree angle and your right heel is off the floor. As you bend your left knee, it should form a 90-degree angle, too—and be careful not to let that knee shift farther forward than your left foot. Keep your back upright and eyes looking straight ahead. Squeeze your glutes, quads, and calves as you press your left heel into the floor, and bring your right leg forward to return to standing. Do 10 reps and then repeat on the opposite leg; that's one set.

2. Donkey Kicks

Start on your mat with your hands and knees



on the floor. Tuck your chin slightly into your chest. Keep your core tight and lift your left leg up toward the ceiling, as if you're trying to press the bottom of your right foot into the ceiling. Your knee should maintain a 90-degree bend the whole time. Be careful not to arch your back or shift your hips as you

move your leg. Hold, and then bring your leg back down to the starting position. Repeat for 12 reps and then switch sides; that's one set.

Full Body

1. Burpee

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. In one fluid motion, lower your body into a squat (hinge at the hips as if sitting in an imaginary chair, holding chest and upper body upright), place your hands on the floor in front of your feet and jump your feet back so you land in a plank position. Then, jump your feet back to where they were near your hands and complete a powerful jump straight into the air. To make it more challenging, add a push-up before jumping up from the plank. If you're a beginner, stand up after jumping out of the plank position (eliminating the jump into the air at the end). One set is 10 reps.

2. Mountain Climbers

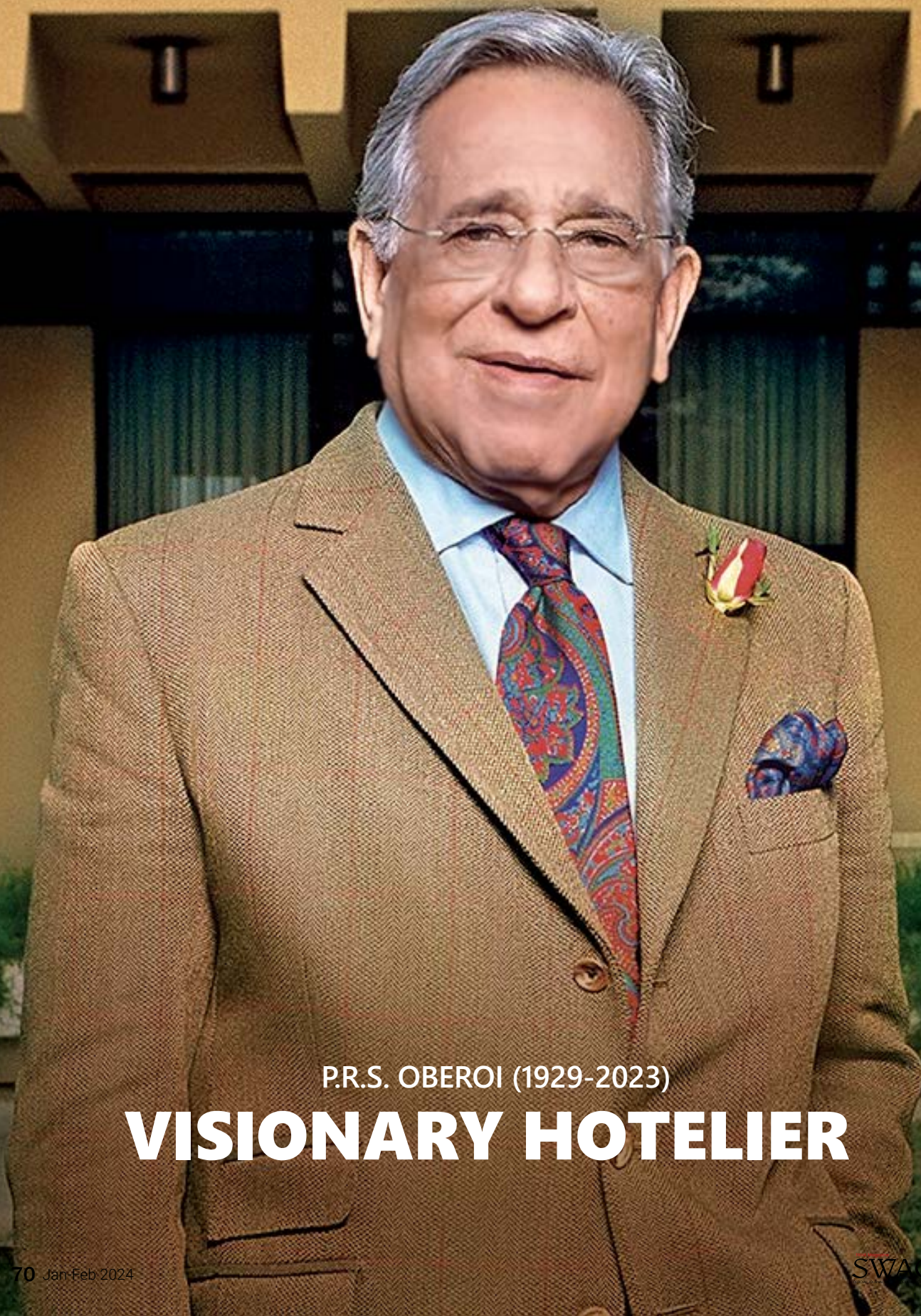
Start in a plank position. Engage your core as you lift your right leg

slightly off the floor and bring your right knee toward the centre of your chest. Return the right leg back to plank position as you switch sides, drawing your left knee into your chest. Continue switching back and forth at a quick pace for 30 seconds; that's one set.

3. Bear Crawls

Start on the floor with your hands and knees on the mat, keeping your back flat and your wrists beneath your shoulders. Lift your knees off the floor about an inch so your weight is being supported by your hands and toes. At the same time, step your right hand and left foot forward while staying close to the floor. Then move your left hand and right foot forward. Repeat up the length of the mat and then reverse directions (up and back down your mat is one repetition), ideally for 20 repetitions; that's one set.

Note: Seek the guidance of a trainer before you begin Body Weight Exercise



P.R.S. OBEROI (1929-2023)

VISIONARY HOTELIER

TRIBUTE TO THE DOYEN OF INDIAN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY



Kiran Kumar

Prithviraj Singh “Biki” Oberoi needs no introduction. The creator of the luxury hotel brand ‘The Oberoi’, which represents the fine luxury segment of the Hotel industry, he changed the face of hotel business in India.

Born in the year 1929, ‘Biki’ as he was lovingly called, took over the reins of EIH (East India Hotels) after the demise of Mohan Singh Oberoi, his father and the founding chairman of The Oberoi group, and remained the group’s CEO until 2013. The Oberoi group runs a chain of luxury hotels under the Oberoi Hotels and Resorts and the Trident brands.

P.R.S. Oberoi was educated at St. Pauls School, Darjeeling, and later in the UK and Switzerland. He was a graduate in hotel management from Lausanne, Switzerland. He was honoured with the Padma Vibushan, India’s second highest civilian honour, in recognition of his exceptional service to the country.

At least 3 hotels of the Oberoi group are listed in the Best Luxury hotels of the world each year. “In addition to providing leadership for

the management of luxury hotels in several countries, Oberoi has been instrumental in pioneering the development of Oberoi Hotels and Resorts. The Oberoi brand has come to represent fine luxury hotels,” reads the Oberoi group website.

The list of honours and accolades that came his way are long. In June 2022 Oberoi was recognized by the International Hospitality Institute as one of the most powerful people in global hospitality. He was also honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award at ILTM (International Luxury Travel Market) in 2012, recognizing his exceptional leadership and vision. And, in 2010, he was named the “Corporate Hotelier of the World” by ‘Hotels’ magazine.

Oberoi, hailed globally as one of the greatest hoteliers and doyen of Indian hospitality, was the real builder of the Oberoi legacy of refined luxury, excellence in service and elevated standards of hospitality. Collectively, these are now the benchmark of luxury in the hotel business across the world.

P.R.S. Oberoi firmly believed that people are the most valuable asset of any organisation and, recognizing the importance of quality in hospitality management, established The Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development in New Delhi in 1967. It is now amongst the best hospitality schools in India and churns out managers through their management and operational training programs.

Here’s what the Patriot newspaper wrote about him: “For almost half a century, Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi, the grand old man of the Indian hotel industry, always left his huge

70-acre farmhouse at Kapashera in South West Delhi in his black Mercedes at 9.30 am.

“A stickler for time throughout his life, PRS Oberoi used to visit the Oberoi Intercontinental Hotel on Zakir Hussain Marg to meet his management team. Also called ‘Biki’, he called his managers to look after the affairs of Oberoi hotels and resorts across the world from that spot...”

“The high point of Biki Oberoi’s trust with the hospitality industry was the moment he convinced his father, Sardar Mohan Singh Oberoi (MS Oberoi), to assign architect and politician Pilloo Mody to design Oberoi Intercontinental in the capital. That was the early 1960s, and many acclaimed architects of the country were keen to grab the lifetime opportunity to design the luxury hotel.

“Once Pilloo Mody, the childhood friend of Pakistan PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had designed the Oberoi Intercontinental hotel, the construction was started in a big way under the watchful eyes of Biki. Immediately after it started operations, Oberoi Intercontinental became the last word in luxury and class.”

That was but the beginning of a long journey that ended on November 14, 2023. With P.R.S. Oberoi’s passing at the age of 94, his son Vikram Oberoi has taken over the reins of the Oberoi group and he would henceforth be the CEO and Managing Director of East India Hotels.

Kiran Kumar is Principal, Federation of Kerala Hotels Association-Institute of Hotel Management (FKHA-IHM).

Puneet Chhatwal takes over as FAITH Chairperson



(FAITH) has chosen Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited, as its new Chairperson. Chhatwal will also continue as president of HAI, a position he was re-elected to in 2022.

Chhatwal has taken over as Chairperson of FAITH from former ITC Executive Director Nakul Anand, who has retired. Mr. Anand has also relinquished membership of the Hotel Association of India (HAI), where he served in the Executive Committee.

“With the support of all the members I will strive to make this a strong policy advocacy body on issues related to the tourism and hospitality industry and carry forward the legacy built by Anand,” said Chhatwal on being appointed FAITH Chairperson.

Several national tourism associations, including national associations of tour operators, travel agents, hotels, transport operators, conventions & exhibition operators, and restaurants and tourism attractions.

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality

Singapore Tourism Board appoints Markus Tan as Regional Director, India Middle East and South Asia



Mr. Tan will spearhead STB's initiatives in promoting Leisure and Business Travel & Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (BTMICE) in the IMESA region. His responsibilities will include overseeing travel promotions, public relations, and marketing, and driving developmental efforts to enhance Singapore's position as a premier travel and business destination.

Mr. Tan has been with STB for 18 years in various pivotal roles. Prior to this appointment, he served as the Director for World Expo and led the government effort to conceptualise, develop, and operate the Singapore Pavilion at Osaka World Expo 2025.

From 2015 to 2022, he was based in Tokyo, Japan, as the Regional Director for North Asia, overseeing STB operations in Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Commenting on this appointment, Mr. Tan said, “I am excited to take on the role of STB's Regional Director in IMESA. India is a nation of rich culture, diversity, and, particularly in this historic moment of its explosive global growth, incredible business opportunities. As STB strives to showcase the best of what Singapore has to offer, we remain committed to nurturing our existing relationships and cultivating new ones with the Indian travel industry.”

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has appointed Markus Tan as the Regional Director for India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa (IMESA) effective January 1, 2024. In his new role, based in Mumbai,

Shilpi Khanna appointed GM, Hyatt Centric, Juhu



Hospitality industry veteran Shilpi Khanna has been appointed as the new General Manager of Hyatt Centric Juhu, bringing over two decades of rich experience to this position.

Khanna's extensive background in the Indian and international hospitality landscape and her contributions at ITC, Oberoi Group,

Marriott, and Hilton make her a prime candidate for delivering outstanding guest experiences. She is an alumna of the prestigious IHM Kolkata and holds a national-level scholarship from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Most recently she was the Director of Operations at Conrad Bengaluru.

Shaji Nair appointed GM, Rhythm Kumarakom



Rhythm Kumarakom, a luxury resort in the heart of Kerala's backwaters, has appointed Shaji Nair as its new General Manager.

With a prolific career spanning over 30 years in the dynamic realms of Hospitality, Operation Management, Business Development Planning, Service Delivery, and Client Management, Mr. Nair brings a wealth of expertise and strategic vision to his role.

Before joining Rhythm Kumarakom, Mr. Nair served in significant leadership positions

with the City Seasons Group of Hotels in the UAE and Oman. In his role as General Manager at Rhythm Kumarakom, Mr. Nair will play a pivotal role in overseeing all operational and decision-making activities.

"I am honored to be a part of the Rhythm family and contribute to the legacy of excellence that the brand embodies. Together, we aim to create memorable experiences for our guests and foster the growth of this esteemed establishment," said Mr. Nair.

FCM appoints Sunny Sodhi as Managing Director, FCM Travel India



as the Managing Director of FCM Travel India.

Sodhi has spent more than 26 years in the travel and hospitality industry. He is a seasoned professional with experience establishing businesses and delivering accelerated growth.

Previously at OYO, Sodhi was the COO for Luxury and Upscale Business and the Head of Sales for India and Southeast Asia. Before OYO, he was the COO for Yatra for Business (Corporate Travel), a vertical he established from the ground up. He was also the Head

of Industry Relations for Yatra.com. Sodhi has also had successful stints at HRG and CWT India in business, sales, and client management roles. He also actively supports the start-up ecosystem in the country.

"India is a vital market for FCM in Asia, and we have been making strategic investments over the last two years in both our people and technology, which have led to strong performances in both corporate travel as well as FCM Meetings & Events," said Sodhi.

FCM, the corporate division of the Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG), has appointed Sunny Sodhi

Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences appoints Arshiya Paul as Talent and Culture Manager



Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences have appointed Arshiya Paul as Talent and Culture manager. Paul has taken up the new assignment after a stint at Accor's ibis Kolkata Rajarhat.

With her experience of over 14 years, Paul has worked with renowned brands including The Leela, Flipkart, IPG Mediabrand. She is a strategic leader who believes not only in creating a conducive workplace but

also building a workforce that believes in people philosophy and simultaneously driving company vision.

Paul is a graduate in Human Resource Management and a certified hospitality trainer from AHLEI. She will be responsible for nurturing a diversified culture and developing talent aligned with the group's business objectives, and building skills and capabilities across the company.

Travel Industry

ON A ROLL AGAIN!

Indian Travel industry is poised for growth with an unprecedented rise in gross booking value (GBV).

Although the war in Ukraine, turbulent West Asia situation, tense India-Canada relations, rising inflation and fuel prices have all impacted the industry adversely, Indian travel industry is once again on a roll.

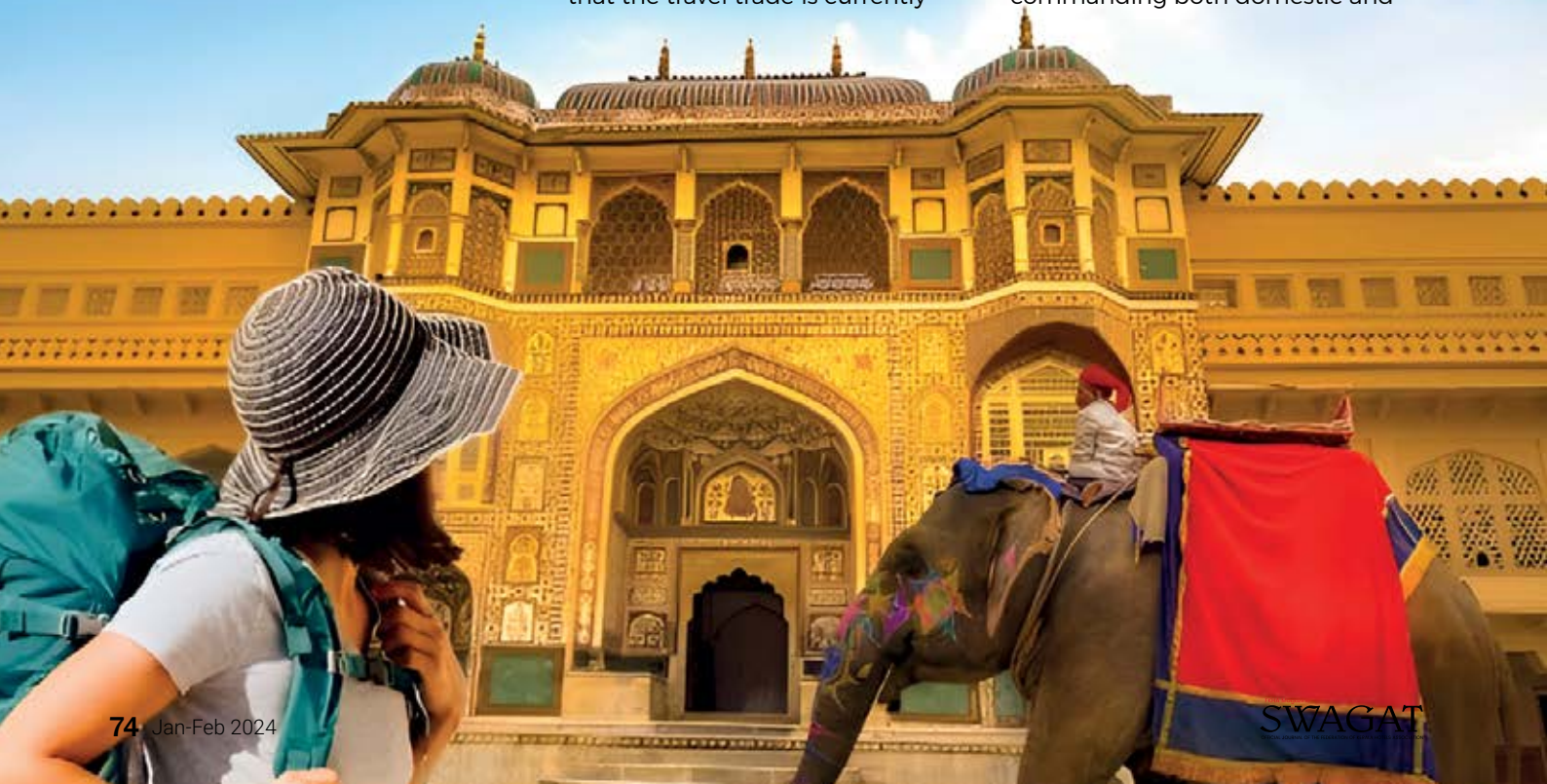
Recent independent reports indicate that Indian travellers took an average of 2.9 vacations in 2023, up from 2.5 vacations in 2022. Additionally, the average per-trip spending of Indian travellers increased by up to 20 per cent in 2023 compared to previous years.

Travel booking industry notes that the travel trade is currently

experiencing an unprecedented peak in gross booking value (GBV) and that all major sectors, including air, hotel, bus, and train, have not only rebounded, but have surpassed pre-pandemic GBV levels.

2023 saw a few prominent highlights working for the industry, including the G20 summit hosted by India, the IPL, and the cricket World Cup, which kept occupancies and average room rates on a high, according to reports. Travel trends in 2023

Leisure travel dominated the sector, commanding both domestic and





international travel. There are also clear signs that visa-free travel options offered by countries such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Kenya is fuelling demand for outbound travel.

Market reports show that the total outbound tourist departure for the first 10 months of 2023 stood at 22.6 million, surpassing the 17.5 million for the same period last year. Additionally, the country saw 7.2 million foreign tourist arrivals during the first 10 months of 2023 against 4.6 million visitors during a similar period in 2022.

The general impression of the industry is that factors like the gradual easing of international travel restrictions, introduction of flexible visa policies, and the G20 conference went a long way to promote India as a top global destination for foreign tourists.

There were also other trends that were noticed in the year like flexibility in the operations of those in the travel business. Businesses now need to rapidly adapt to offering solutions such as NCEMI (no cost equated monthly instalment) and Buy Now Pay Later.

Spiritual tourism has also gained momentum with religious

destinations seeing record visitations. According to the year-end booking data by hospitality chain Oyo, Puri secured the top spot as the most-booked spiritual destination with Amritsar, Varanasi, and Haridwar following suit.

It is widely felt that the spiritual tourism industry could see a 10-fold increase in 2024, making Ayodhya a global spiritual centre akin to Vatican City and Mecca.

Sustainability also got marked attention, with a significant focus on eco-friendly practices. The increased focus on sustainable tourism reflects a growing global consciousness about environmental impact of tourism.

Technology has also played a pivotal role as the integration of digital tools became essential to create personalised guest experiences and streamline operational efficiency. Rapid technological innovations, especially in artificial intelligence and virtual reality, reshaped guest experiences, challenging traditional service models.

Consumers also became more willing to invest in unique encounters, seeking varied and quicker experiences. The support

from travellers and the ever-increasing influence of social media have heightened the desire to explore intriguing aspects that were previously unknown but are now highlighted through constant visual exposure.

Family-oriented travel experiences and an increasing presence of solo female travellers enjoying group outings are on the rise. These trends obviously indicate enduring behavioural shifts in travel preferences that are likely here to stay.

On the flip side, while the outbound travel soared, the inbound numbers have still not reached 2019-2020 levels. Market experts observe that many factors such as the government raising the TCS rates on foreign travel, geopolitical conflicts and supply chain issues, especially in the airline sector impacted the tourist flow during the season.

Simultaneously, reduction in plane inventory has led to capacity constraints, delays, cancellations, and increased flight costs for the consumer, frustrating the travellers. The travel industry expects that 2024 will see an aggressive push for marketing India on the global platform.



CELEBRATE FRENCH WINE!

At the Monte Marte Wine Harvest Festival in Paris

Every autumn, since 1934, the Montmartre Wine Harvest Festival puts the spotlight on the Butte Montmartre, one of the most famous districts in Paris

Planning a visit to Europe in October? Don't miss the annual Montmartre Wine Harvest Festival!

Every October, in the steep heights of Paris' Montmartre, the streets come alive with tens of thousands of tourists, all eager to partake in the wine harvest festival.

The Montmartre Grape Harvest Festival, also known as the Fête de Vendange, will take place from October 11-15, 2024. The festival is a celebration of the annual harvest from the Clos de Montmartre vineyards.

Famous for its white-domed basilica of Sacré-Coeur, the Butte Montmartre is also reputed for its vines. Vendanges, as the traditional grape harvest festival is known, takes over the narrow streets behind the Sacré Coeur Basilica (and beyond) for a few days. The festivities are centred in particular around the Clos Montmartre, one of Paris' only remaining vineyards.

Celebrated since 1934, the grape harvest festival is a joyful, entirely free celebration of French wine

(and the harvest season more generally).

Some 400,000 people— from locals to tourists— throng the streets year after year for wine and food tastings from local vendors, music, performances, thematic walks, and elaborate wine ceremonies presided over by officials in brightly coloured robes.

More than 40 bars and restaurants in the 18th arrondissement take part in this event that attracts more and more visitors. There are lots of special activities for everyone: concerts, street entertainment, tastings of artisanal and regional products, a dance, walks, visits, exhibitions, etc.

There's also typically an annual wine auction that sees around 1,000 bottles of wine— called Cuvée du Clos Montmartre— produced from grapes grown in the Clos Montmartre vineyard sold for charity. And in certain years, fireworks often light up the skies of Montmartre, ending the festivities on a spectacular note.



India International Travel Mart (IITM), Kochi

Dates: 19-21 January 2024

Venue: Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Kochi

India International Travel Mart (IITM) is organised in 9 major cities in India. The Kochi leg of the IITM would take place at the Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Kochi from January 19 to 21, according to the organisers.

Stated to be India's largest travel trade platform organizing varied B2B and B2C exhibitions and events, IITM is supported by State and Union Territory Tourism Departments, International Tourism Boards and their representative companies, along with most of the travel associations of India including TAAI, OTOAI, ETAA, IATO, ADTOI, ATOAI, SKAL, etc.



SIHRA Annual Convention 2024

Dates: 19-21 January 2024

Venue: Novotel Varun Beach, Visakhapatnam

South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA) would hold its Annual convention from January 19 to 21 at the Novotel Varun Beach, Visakhapatnam.

Open to Hoteliers, Restaurants, and Vendors, online registration is available for both SIHRA members and non-members.

Established in 1951 under the Companies Act, SIHRA operates as the Southern Regional Chapter of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).

Covering Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry, SIHRA's diverse membership includes small-scale restaurants to luxurious five-star hotels. Attendees can explore the latest trends, innovations, and networking opportunities at the SIHRA annual convention.



SATTE 2024 B2B Travel Exhibition, NOIDA

Dates: 22-24 February 2024

Venue: T3 Conference Hall, India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh

SATTE-2024, South Asia's leading B2B travel exhibition, offers a golden opportunity for professionals in the travel and tourism industry to showcase their products and services to a diverse audience from around the world.

Scheduled to take place from February 22 to 24, at the T3 Conference Hall, India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, U.P., India, this trade exhibition is anticipated to host around 35,000 visitors and 1,200 exhibitors.

Supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, as well as various national and international tourism boards and travel associations, SATTE-2024 is a vital platform for networking, knowledge-sharing, and idea exchange within the industry.

The event will boast a wide array of exhibitors, including national tourist offices, State Tourism Boards, airlines, hotels, destination management companies (DMCs), cruise liners, and other travel and tourism suppliers. Attendees can explore diverse products and services, ranging from tour packages to travel technology solutions and accommodation options.

Beyond the trade exhibition, SATTE-2024 will offer an enriching experience with knowledge-sharing sessions, workshops, and seminars. These sessions are designed to keep attendees abreast of the latest industry trends and innovations.

12th Kerala Travel Mart to be held from Sept. 26 to 29



In a significant move to showcase Kerala's prowess in the tourism sector on a global scale, the 12th edition of the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM-2024) is set to unfold from September 26 to 29, 2024, in Kochi.

This flagship event, recognized as India's largest tourism and hospitality conclave, draws delegates from around the world, making it a crucial platform for bolstering Kerala Tourism.

Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas shared insights during a press conference, expressing optimism about the event's potential to further elevate Kerala Tourism, already on a robust growth trajectory.

The inaugural ceremony kicks off on September 26, followed by three

days of enlightening sessions at the Sagara and Samudrika convention centres at the Willingdon Island from September 27 to 29.

Leading up to KTM-2024, a pre-mart tour from September 22 to 26 will engage media professionals, vloggers, and influencers. Additionally, a five-day post-mart tour across Kerala starting from September 30 is planned for select buyers participating in KTM-2024.

Buyers from the U.S., the U.K., Russia, West Asia, South Africa, and various European countries, including Scandinavia, will enrich the event's international representation. The biennial meet stands as Asia's largest tourism event with a robust global presence.

Scheduled for September 27, 28, and 29, the business sessions of KTM 2024 will focus on various facets of tourism, with the expo open to the public on September 29. This edition of KTM will particularly spotlight Kerala as a wedding destination, promote Responsible Tourism, and drive momentum in MICE (meetings, industries, conferences, and exhibitions) tourism.

Cruise tourism is also a focal point, with expectations high for engaging potential buyers from this segment. The 12th KTM promises to be a comprehensive exploration of Kerala's diverse tourism offerings, welcoming stakeholders and enthusiasts from across the globe.



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