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Press Release

Kerala Scripts an 'Enter the Dragon' Story in China

Strong interest for Chinese outbound tour operators in Kerala; Kerala Tourism participates in BITE 2015 for first time: Roadshow in Shanghai

Thiruvananthapuram, June 29: Riding on the early success of a high-voltage 'Visit Kerala' campaign, Kerala Tourism has embarked on an aggressive drive to tap the vast Chinese market, the highest in the world, to boost foreign tourist arrivals in the state.

Leading Chinese outbound tour operators have shown strong interest in Kerala at the Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE) 2015, which concluded on Sunday in the Chinese capital. The sprawling Kerala Tourism pavilion themed on backwaters and 'Kalaripayattu' was a huge draw among the visitors to BITE, the leading Asian travel and tourism fair.

"We are encouraged by the tremendous response from the Chinese tourism industry," said Kerala Tourism Minister Shri A P Anilkumar. "Considering that it was the first ever participation of Kerala Tourism in BITE, it gives us a lot of confidence for the future," he said.

Among the initial visitors to the Kerala Tourism pavilion were Beijing Vice Mayor Ms Chang Hong and Mr Wang Xiaofeng, the Vice Chairman of China's top tourism authority, the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). Both Ms Chang and Mr Wang jointly inaugurated the Kerala Pavilion with Kerala Chief Secretary Shri Jiji Thomson, India's Ambassador to China, His Excellency Ashik K Kantha, and Kerala Tourism Secretary, Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao.

The first day of Kerala Tourism at BITE showed a flurry of trade meetings between state government officials and senior leaders of Chinese tourism industry. Kerala Tourism's trade partners participated in BITE 2015 also held meetings with their Chinese counterparts in an interaction aimed at establishing a firm collaborative partnership with each other. Along with its trade partners from the state, Kerala Tourism is organising a road show in Shanghai on June 30.

"After our impressive successes in capturing the European market, it is only a logical step for us to enter the huge market in China in our backyard," said Shri Anil Kumar, referring to the foray by Kerala Tourism into China, a vast market for outbound tourists in the world.

"We are confident that by tapping into the vast Chinese market, we will be able to substantially increase foreign tourist arrivals in our state," the Tourism Minister added.

"Our participation in BITE and the road show in Shanghai are expected to help increase the arrivals from China further in the coming years," said Chief Secretary Shri Jiji Thomson. "With the launch of the 'Visit Kerala' campaign in March this year, we decided to shift into high gear by making a foray into the Chinese market," he added.



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A highlight of the occasion was the invitation from the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF), the global tourism body that aims for world peace through tourism, to Kerala Tourism to join WTCF. The state Chief Secretary and Kerala Tourism Secretary met WTCF Director General Mr Song Yue, who is also the head of Beijing Municipal Commission for Tourism Development.

"It is an honour to be invited by WTCF to become a member," said Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri Rao. "The objective of our initiatives like strengthening the Spice Route heritage with other countries along the ancient route and implementing sustainable tourism is achieving peace across the world," he added.

Kerala Tourism's trade partners and the state delegation met leading outbound operators in China like the China International Travel Service, Huangjia International Travel Services, China Cyts Outbound Travel Services and Beijing Global Tour International Travel Services.

Trade partners of Kerala Tourism attending the BITE 2015 are Dravidian Trails, Intersight Tours, Marvel Tours, Spice Land Holidays, CGH Earth, Thomas Hotels and Resorts, Poovar Island Resort, Somatheram Ayurveda Group and Spice Route Luxury Cruises.

The three-day BITE 2015 show, which opened on Friday, had an impressive Kerala Tourism pavilion, the biggest by a state tourism board in India, on the theme of Kalaripayattu and backwaters. The 56-sq metre pavilion was equipped to entrance the BITE 2015 visitors with its eye-catching visuals of houseboats and martial arts performances.

The Kalaripayattu - Kung Fu fusion and a Kathakali performance at the Kerala Pavilion were the major attractions among visitors to BITE 2015, which is attended by tourism boards and operators from around the world.

The BITE 2015, which mainly caters to outbound tourism, is seen as a launching pad by Kerala Tourism to attract visitors from China. Chinese tourists, the highest spenders in the world, are known to prefer Asian holiday destinations.

"With three international airports in the state ready to grab the Visa on Arrival facility for Chinese visitors, we expect a steady arrival of tourists from China during the 'Visit Kerala' year", said Shri Jiji Thomson.

Kerala has seen a 34 percent increase in tourist arrivals from China last year over the previous year. According to figures available for 2013, 175,000 Chinese tourists had visited India.

A series of events was organised in China by Kerala Tourism during the trade expo, including Kalaripayattu performances. The fusion between Kalaripayattu and the Chinese Shaolin Kung Fu was also organized during a 'Kerala Evening' at the Indian Embassy in Beijing on Friday. A press meet for mainstream Chinese media was also part of the Kerala Tourism itinerary.

"A number of factors are in our favour to attract visitors from China," said Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri Rao. "Besides proximity and a shared cultural heritage during the Spice Route and Silk Route eras,



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the Chinese visitors will find Kerala just the right place they wanted to go to spend their quality time," he added.

Chinese tourists, who prefer shorter visits, are also known for their activity-oriented holidays.

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