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Tourists Flock to Malapuzha , Idukki Dams

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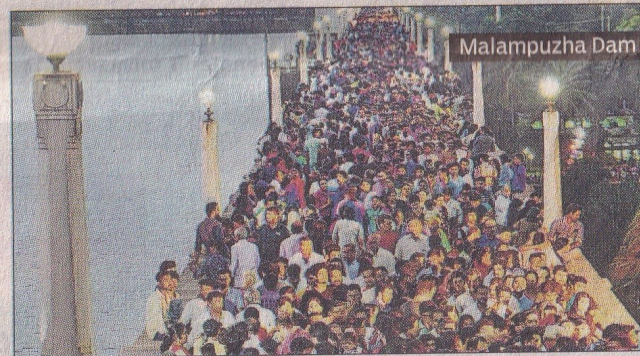
Palakkad/Idukki: With state receiving excess rain this monsoon, tourists are flocking to Malampuzha and Idukki dams that are almost filled to the brim.

Malampuzha dam and garden registered an all-time visitor record of 31,293 on Sunday, raking in a record collection of Rs 8.58 lakh, breaking the previous record of Rs 8.15 lakh on Thiruvonam day last year.

There was a heavy rush of visitors from different parts of the state and neighbouring Tamil Nadu after all four shutters of the dam were opened last week, resulting in frequent traffic jams at Akathethara and Kadukkamkunnam, located 3km away from the spot.

On Saturday, the gate collection was Rs.3.92 lakh. When dam shutters were opened on previous Wednesday, 11,630 tourists visited the garden and dam, fetching a record ticket collection of Rs 2.55 lakh. As the water level in reservoir rose to 114m, reports of opening the shutters brought many tourists, said assistant engineer Siddiq.

He said the tourists were also visiting the 32km-long Malampuzha ring road around the reservoir and Kava River area to see the numerous waterfalls that has sprouted in the Western Ghats after heavy monsoon rain. He said for Onam festival, the dam and garden would be illuminated from August 22 to September 2. When the ticket charge was



hiked by Rs 5 per adult from Rs 25 to Rs 30 from Wednesday, there were protests from visitors. But there was no change in the Rs 10 ticket charge for kids aged below 10, said irrigation department authorities.

District tourism promotion council secretary Ajeesh said

the ticket charge hike was decided earlier not only for Malampuzha but all other tourism centres to provide insurance coverage to tourists as decided by the state government. Meanwhile tourists have been thronging Idukki dam, one of the main beauty spots

in the district. Presently, the dam is kept open so that visitors can visit on weekends and public holidays. As part of Onam celebrations, KSEB hydel tourism wing officials expect a huge tourist inflow.

"Last Saturday, 600 tourists visited the dam, fetching an income of Rs 25,000 and 1,800 tourists visited on Sunday and it earned an income of Rs 60,000," said Sreenivasan, a ticket counter staff.

In June 2017, 5,541 tourists visited the dam and it earned an income of Rs 1,93,934 and in July 5,913 tourists visited it, fetching a sum of Rs 1,05,825. "The dam almost filled up to the brim. This adds to the rare scenic beauty of the area, attracting tourists. Their numbers increase year by year.

Domestic tourists form a major chunk of the visitors," said Sreenivasan.

"After 1992, the dam is nearly full now and we hope it will attract a large number of tourists during Onam. Every year, the dam will be opened to the public for 30 days," added Sreenivasan. Recently, Idukki arch dam was painted white, giving it a fresh look. The entrance fee is Rs 25 for adults and Rs 10 for students. KSEB hydel tourism wing is providing buggy car facility to tourists, the fee is Rs 50 per head.

Police security has been provided in the area and visitors are prohibited from carrying mobile phone, camera and electronic equipment. Photography and video are also prohibited on dam premises.