

Kerala's riches captured on compact disc

By LEELA MENON

Kochi, Dec 16: A CD-ROM on Kerala, depicting its unique scenic wealth, art, heritage and tourist locations has gained the official acceptability of the Department of Tourism, to be marketed globally in an effort to create awareness about the State. The CD-ROM comes as a refreshing effort even as tourists continue to complain about the pervasive ignorance about God's Own Country.

Despite protestations to the contrary, it remains a fact that the North is more on the tourist spotlight, Kerala's unique USPs notwithstanding.

The CD-ROM steps in to fill this precise lacuna.

Divided into five sections, the CD-ROM spotlights the rich mosaic of Kerala, its land and its people, its art forms like *mohiniyattam* and *theyyam*, its exclusive USP of Ayurveda, Kerala's exotic past, its little-known history, the myths and legends woven around it, like that of Parasuraman, Mahabali and St Thomas, as well as details of tourist locations and infrastructure, like education, agriculture, health, industry and even banking.

It begins appropriately with a *nalukettu*, the traditional arc-



hitecture of Kerala. At the turn of a key, a door opens to the marvel of Kerala's past and present.

In the section showing land and people, the basic data of all 14 districts of Kerala, including area and geographic location, sights to be seen, the railway and bus routes, and even the nature of the soil - whether it is laterite or not - is given.

Very few know that the name 'laterite' was given by Francis Hamilton Buchanan, a Scottish surgeon, who identified it. That Kerala is a destina-

tion for all seasons because of its climate is stressed through details of monsoons. Data about the different religions in communally harmonious Kerala is provided.

Lifestyle depicts ritualistic attires, cuisine and jewellery and the traditional marriages of Hindus, Christians and Muslims.

The CD-ROM even shows the banana leaf on which the traditional culinary wealth of Kerala is displayed - from *aviyal*, *kalan* and *sambar* to *kichadi* and *thoran*, in their prec-

ise places on the banana leaf.

Another door opens to the flora and fauna of Kerala, showing the treasure trove of faunal life, like the 101 mammals, 503 species of birds, 111 amphibian species, 330 species of butterflies, and 120 species of termites, apart from 4,000 species of vascular plants, 267 species of wild orchids of which 70 are exclusive to the Western Ghats.

History talks not only about the evolution of Kerala and its coalition politics but also about the various movements in the State. The folklore of Kerala dwells on the *yakshi* and *chathan* cult.

The room on heritage in the CD-ROM displays the wide variety of music in Kerala from *sopanasangeetham* to *mappilappattu*, and *vadakkanpattu* to tribal music, apart from the 10,000 Malayalam film songs recorded to date.

The 11 musical instruments in our repertoire, the three major orchestras like *pandimelam*, major festivals like Thrissur Pooram, and details about traditional and regional festivals like Thiruvathira, Muharam Attukal Pongala and Kalpathi Ratholsavam are shown.

One even gets a glimpse of Malayalam alphabets and a sample of its poetry.