

THASL conducts health and safety awareness campaign for Hikkaduwa region hotels

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Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka

Over 40 accommodation providers in the Hikkaduwa region are now better informed about how to manage the risk of COVID-19 following the recent successful workshop held by The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) in partnership with Australia's Market Development Facility (MDF).

The Hikkaduwa Workshop was the second in a planned island-wide series, which are open to both THASL members and other accommodation providers. The workshops raise awareness of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) 'Sri Lanka Tourism Operational Guidelines with Health Protocols' advice on COVID-19 protocols, and the workshops have been endorsed by the SLTDA.

"The guidelines released by SLTDA are very thorough and all properties, regardless of size, need to follow these in order to minimise risk and be able to re-open safely for tourists. We hope that these very useful workshops organised by THASL and MDF will help small and medium properties, in particular, be better prepared. We hope that through these workshops, providers also understand the importance and necessity to register with SLTDA going forward," noted Kimarli Fernando, SLTDA Chairperson.

Given that the guidelines are vital for all tourism stakeholders, THASL is reaching out to accommodation providers outside of its membership for the awareness workshops. The Hikkaduwa workshop was attended by over 40 accommodation providers, including representatives from a number of small and medium-scale properties.

"We are extending our support to the small and medium hotels beyond our membership to fully understand and follow the SLTDA guidelines," stated THASL President Sanath Ukwatte. "Our goal through these campaigns is to ensure that the accommodation sector

as a whole is well prepared for a safe reopening when Sri Lanka is ready to welcome international tourists.”

The workshop was conducted by Dr. Prasad Jayasuriya, Director Tourism Planning and Development of SLTDA, who led the development of the guidelines, and THASL Past President and MDF Senior Tourism Advisor Mr. Srilal Miththapala, in the presence of Mrs. Amal Goonetilleke, CEO of THASL. The sessions help accommodation providers understand the importance of health and safety, enabling them to better prepare for the next step of obtaining the SLTDA’s ‘Safe and Secure’ COVID-19 safety standard compliance certification. The certification is mandatory for providers to re-open properties to receive international visitors. The clear guidance has been particularly helpful for smaller players.

“The workshop was very useful for us working in a three-star hotel,” noted Renuka Peiris, Front Office Manager of Lanka Super Corals. “We have to upgrade a lot of things to cater to tourists in the future. Therefore, it was very useful to hear from Mr. Miththapala and Dr. Prasad.”

“It was reassuring to see many small and medium scale service providers amongst the participants,” said Mr. Siri Goonewardane, President of the Hikkaduwa Hoteliers Association, who organised the event in partnership with THASL and MDF. “We encourage the hotels in the region to adhere to the guidelines to assure the international travellers that Sri Lanka is poised to receive them safely.”

Australia’s engagement in the awareness campaign is part of its broader support to the Sri Lankan tourism industry, through MDF. Starting with a successful workshop in Bentota, MDF is extending its support to THASL to extend the campaign across Sri Lanka.

“MDF is committed to supporting Sri Lanka’s COVID-19 response and recovery,” stated MDF Country Director Momina Saqib. “Australia has been a long-standing partner to the Sri Lankan tourism industry and MDF will continue this support through collaborations such as this initiative with THASL.”

THASL will conduct workshops in Tissamaharama/Yala, Galle and Negombo throughout August, followed by the Cultural Triangle, the Central Province and the Eastern Province.

The comprehensive operational guidelines can be found on the [SLTDA Website](#).

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