THASL begins awareness campaign on SLTDA guidelines for hotels

MEDIA RELEASE– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bentota, Sri Lanka

The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) has partnered with Australia's Market Development Facility (MDF) on an island-wide campaign to raise awareness among accommodation providers on the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) guidelines for safe tourism operations with COVID-19 prevention measures. The campaign kicked off with a workshop, hosted by THASL and the Australian Government-funded MDF, in Bentota for hoteliers operating in the Bentota and Beruwela areas.

The SLTDA published 'Sri Lanka Tourism Operational Guidelines with Health Protocols' in June, with comprehensive guidance and procedures for the sector. The guidelines are the blueprint for the sector to prepare itself for a safe reopening. The THASL workshops will focus on the guidance specific to accommodation providers' operation and will target small and medium properties, in particular.

"The guidelines are very comprehensive and cover even small steps that tourism operators need to take in order to minimise risk. We hope that these useful workshops by THASL will encourage hoteliers to embrace the guidelines fully so that Sri Lanka can safely return to being a sought-after travel destination," noted Kimarli Fernando, SLTDA Chairperson.

The guidelines can be found on SLTDA's website and include advice on the complete running of a property - ranging from welcoming guests safely to cleaning procedures for Housekeeping and seating arrangement in restaurant areas.

"We are grateful to the SLTDA for producing such comprehensive guidelines," states THASL President Sanath Ukwatte. "Our goal through this campaign is to raise awareness among hotels on the SLTDA guidelines and ensure that the accommodation sector is well prepared for whenever the country opens its doors to visitors."

The Bentota workshop was well-received, attended by close to 65 accommodation providers.

"It was good to receive in-depth guidance by a professional hotelier," noted Sisira Senaratne, General Manager Heritance Ahungalla. "The presentation showcased simple and practical application, both from the hotel's and guest's point of view."

Dr. Prasad Jayasuriya, Director Planning and Development at the SLTDA, who spearheaded the SLTDA initiative on designing the guidance, spoke to participants on the importance of adhering to the measures.

'The SLTDA appreciates the timely initiative taken by THASL, with the support of MDF, to conduct awareness sessions for industry stakeholders on the tourism operational guidelines when operating under COVID conditions. I believe the first programme held in Bentota was a great success and laid the right foundation for the continuity of the project," stated Dr. Jayasuriya.

THASL recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Australia's MDF, designed to increase support for strengthening Sri Lanka's tourism recovery. Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in March and the subsequent curfew, THASL and MDF carried out an information campaign for hotels staff, with updates on the situation in Sri Lanka and globally, THASL efforts to support staff, and notifications from hotels.

Commenting on the event, Australian High Commissioner David Holly stated "Australia has been a partner to Sri Lanka in the tourism space for several years now, and we are happy to build on that relationship during this challenging time through our Market Development Facility. We hope that awareness around the SLTDA guidelines will help hotels better prepare to receive tourists in the safest possible way, once activity resumes."

The awareness campaign is conducted by THASL Past President Srilal Miththapala, MDF's Senior Tourism Consultant. Workshops will be held across the country in July and August, with three more planned to take place during the last two weeks of July.

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