

Munnar expects more tourist footfall

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Idukki: The present flowering season of Neelakurinji will end within the next 20 days and eight varieties have bloomed this time in Munnar, said Munnar wildlife warden R Lakshmi.

The varieties are *Strobilanthes kunthianus* (blooms once in 12 years), *Strobilanthes gracilis* (blooms

END OF KURINJI SEASON

once in 10 years), *Strobilanthes neosper* (blooms once in five years), *Strobilanthes luridus* (blooms once in six years), *Strobilanthes pulneyensis* (blooms every year), *Strobilanthes urceolaris* (blooms



VISUAL TREAT: Neelakurinji season will end in the next 20 days

once in 3 years), *Strobilanthes foliosus* (blooms once in 10 years) and *Strobilanthes andersonii* (blooms once in 10 years).

“In 2008, there was mass flowering as over 25 varieties of Neelakurinji bloomed at Eravikulam. In 2008, *Strobilanthes kunthianus* variety did not bloom,”

said faculty at botany department of St Thomas College, Pala Jomy Augustine.

“Flood and unprecedented rain has hit tourist arrivals during Neelakurinji season. In the coming days, we expect heavy tourist rush. Presently over 80,000 people visited the park. We expected over 4.5 lakh tourists this

season and tourism department expected over 8 lakh visitors. Presently, we witnessed the bloom of over six varieties inside the park, four of them have been documented,” said Lakshmi, adding that the flowering season might end in three weeks.

“I expect the flowering season to end by mid-November. Isolated rain will not affect Neelakurinji flowers. Neelakurinji that blooms in Kolukkumalai valley is more big and healthy than the ones in Eravikulam national park,” said Augustine.

The fall in tourist arrivals this season has affected the hotels and resorts in Munnar. They expect a rush this weekend during puja holidays.