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PRESS RELEASE

**Papanasham at Varkala figures among world's 100 best beaches
in Lonely Planet travel book**

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 8 : In a huge endorsement of Kerala's lively beach tourism, Papanasham Beach, Varkala, a stunning seaside getaway, has been featured among the 100 best beaches in the world in the prestigious Lonely Planet's "Best Beaches: 100 of the World's Most Incredible Beaches" guide book.

Located in Thiruvananthapuram district, Papanasham Beach, also known as Varkala beach, overlooks the Arabian Sea, and its silvery stretches of sand and the serene ambience make it a favourite tourist destination.

Fringed by coconut palms, blessed with an unending stretch of blue waters, and endowed with an idyllic serenity, the beach has earned the reputation of a traveller's paradise and rejuvenation point dotted with spas with therapeutic effect gushing out from the surrounding laterite cliff.

Besides being a tourist hotspot, Papanasham beach is also a revered pilgrim site. The belief is that a ritualistic dip in the waters here washes away all the sins (**papam**) and hence this moniker for the beach. The ashes collected from the cremation grounds are immersed at the sea here, in the belief that it will wash away the sins of the deceased and the soul will achieve **moksha** (eternal salvation).

Another peculiarity of the beach is that it is the only place in southern Kerala where cliffs are found adjacent to the Arabian Sea. This has been recorded as a geological monument by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

Expressing happiness, Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riya said, "Featuring into the list of best beaches in the world is a remarkable recognition for Varkala Beach. Lonely Planet travel book has a global readership among travel enthusiasts, and the recognition accorded by it will further reinforce the reputation of the beach as an attractive destination."

Shri Riyas said the government will also fast-track the destination development project for Varkala to turn the core site and the adjoining areas into a world-class tourism destination.

The project includes protection of the Varkala Cliff, a distinguishing feature of the panoramic site, exploring possibilities of using buggies and electric autos to gain access to the cliff, enhancing infrastructure and safety measures, and sharply reducing the use of plastic and other polluting material.



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Tapping into its huge potential as a tourist destination, Shri Riyas had inaugurated a floating bridge and a host of other adventure tourism activities at this beach in December last year. Spanning 100 metres in length and three metres in width, it provides a spacious viewing platform that can accommodate more than 100 visitors at a time.

The floating bridge is a key element in the beach's tourism development and marketing strategy that includes promoting adventure sports like parasailing, scuba diving and paragliding.

Kerala Tourism will be organising the International Surfing Festival at Varkala from March 29 to 31. Surfing athletes from overseas and also India's east and west coastal cities are expected to compete in various categories during the Surfing festival.

"This event aims to make Kerala the premier surfing destination in India and promote the sport of surfing in the country," Shri Riyas said. "The festival also aims to make Varkala, Kerala's premier surfing destination, an internationally recognised surfing hotspot".

Ends