



**Department of Tourism**

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**Press Release**

**Muzhappilangad, Dharmadam projects to elevate Kannur tourism hub status**

**Kannur, Feb. 20:** As part of Kerala Tourism's ambitious plan to pitchfork Kannur as North Kerala's tourism hub, work will start soon on the Rs 52.54 crore first-stage development of the Muzhappilangad Beach, one of the few drive-in beaches in Asia, and the picturesque Dharmadam Beach and Island projects.

The project at an overall cost of Rs 233.72 crores is a key ingredient of Kerala Tourism's aggressive campaign to promote the Malabar region and has immense potential to put Kannur on the world tourism map. Featured by the BBC among the top six best beaches for driving in the world, Dharmadam is surrounded by rivers on three sides and the Arabian sea on one side. Dharmadam Island offers a picture-perfect view of the confluence of Anjarakandy and Thalassery Rivers.

"The development offers a great opportunity to attract a large number of tourists to this stunning destination, which is heavily under-utilising its tourism potential," said Tourism Minister Shri Kadakampally Surendran.

The estimated footfall owing to the development is estimated to be 1.8 – 2.0 million visitors per annum. This will contribute to augment the GDP of the state, he said adding that the project is anticipated to transform the location and offer development opportunities for other businesses and industries in the region.

With a new International Airport at Kannur, the three tourism sites are now accessible by air from major domestic and international tourist destinations.

Muzhappilangad, where more than 30 species of migratory birds including the Pectoral Sandpiper and Caspian Plover visit every winter and Dharmadam, once known as an important Buddhist centre, are located about 27 km from the Kannur International Airport and it takes about 30 minutes to reach the site from the Kannur Railway Station. This makes the site, one of the most accessible tourist destinations.

Currently, as per the master-plan, the project is divided into three parts -- Muzhappilangad Beach, Dharmadam Beach and Dharmadam Island.

These three sites are not interlinked efficiently and thus they miss out on an excellent opportunity to attract tourists visiting any of the three destinations. Moreover, Dharmadam Island is inaccessible during high tides. "Our primary objective is to connect the three sites by building two pedestrian bridges," said Ms Rani George, Principal Secretary, Kerala Tourism.



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The first pedestrian bridge will connect Muzhappilangad Beach with Dharmadam Beach and the second one will link Dharmadam Beach with Dharmadam Island.

As the site is substantial in size, a number of activities are possible there to attract tourists. If the zoning is not done appropriately, activities may duplicate or even compete with each other. Thus it is important to carve out character areas based on the site potential and propose activities related to specific character areas to offer diversified experience to the domestic and foreign tourists, explained Kerala Tourism Director Shri P Bala Kiran.

Muzhappilangad beach will have a number of family focused activities at the promenade to offer an exotic experience to the domestic tourists and familiar beach front environment with an added advantage of Drive-In to the foreign tourists. What is proposed there are water sports, restaurants, plazas, kids play area, seating areas for elderly, youth centre, toilets, flood defence system, dedicated parking etc.

Dharmadam Beach will offer unique experiences to entertain visitors. It will offer a unique experience of Musical Fountain in a river basin and jogging and cycling track, boat restaurants etc.

Also proposed are a Giant Wheel and a world-class health resort offering Kerala's unique Ayurvedic therapies. It will have cottages, rooms and allied international quality facilities to enhance the footfall of domestic, NRI and foreign tourists.

Since Dharmadam Island attracts a wide variety of bird species, including some of the migratory birds, it is proposed to introduce nature walk backed with supporting facilities. Also proposed is an underground sculpture garden to attract tourists who love nature and would like to explore both above ground and under water experiences.

The project is funded by Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) and executed by the Kerala Irrigation Infrastructure Development Corporation (KIIDC) Limited as the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).

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