

# TIMES OF INDIA

## Cell to monitor progress of tourism projects

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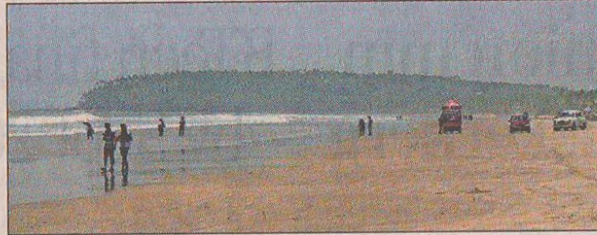
#### Thiruvananthapuram:

With poll announcement expected in the first week of March 2021, the government is in a hurry to showcase its achievements before the public. Now, tourism department has appointed 17 project engineers for monitoring its projects worth Rs 314 crore.

The project monitoring cell will have one project engineer in each district in addition to two project engineers and one technical assistant at tourism headquarters. The expenses for their appointment is estimated at Rs 1.41 crore and it includes remuneration, vehicle expenses, procuring technical devices etc.

The cell is being constituted for carrying out day-to-day updation of project monitoring system, the chief minister's office portal, progress verification of state and central projects.

The department has schemes worth Rs 320.14 crore



Representational photo

The CM personally reviewed Muzhuppilangad-Dharmadom beach project (Rs 233 cr) and Thalassery heritage project (Rs 142cr) in June

in the current financial year. While tourism directorate implements projects worth Rs 307.11 crore, the rest of the plan allocation is shared between KTDC (Rs 9 cr), Bekal Resorts Development Corporation (Rs 2.5 cr) and KTIL (Rs 1.53 cr). Till Aug 31, the expenditure by the department stood at Rs 122.60 crore (38.6% of plan allocation), which is much better than the departmental average (19.71% for 53 departments).

In addition to the 12 mega projects that are directly monitored by the CM with Feb 28, 2021 as the completion dead-

line, the government has asked all departments to complete as many projects as possible.

In June, the chief minister had personally reviewed Muzhuppilangad-Dharmadom beach project and Thalassery heritage project and had instructed officials to initiate the necessary CRZ clearance for the beach project. The beach project is worth Rs 233.72 crore. The Thalassery heritage project, worth Rs 142.5 crore, is spread across Kannur, Kozhikode and Wayanad.

"The projects in tourism

are of top priority for the government especially when the state's unique selling proposition is tourism that was badly hit after Covid outbreak," said government sources.

In the circular issued by the general administration department on Thursday – addressed to all department secretaries, heads of line departments, heads of PSUs and all collectors – the government has asked them to complete all ongoing schemes, works and programmes before March so that seeking permission from election commission can be avoided once model code of conduct comes into force.

But, at the same time, a question also arises: will appointing project monitoring cells at the last moment be another waste of public money. "There are multiple departments running several projects and schemes. Those departments are not running project monitoring cells to ensure the timely completion of the projects," sources added.