

# NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

God's Own Country on the path of becoming key heritage tourism hub

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## God's Own Country on the path of becoming key heritage tourism hub

Govt thrust on heritage projects revealed in proposals contained in the state budget

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THE tourism department has set its eyes on promoting heritage tourism in the state with a handful of projects entering the final stage. The government's thrust to the segment was reiterated last week, when Finance Minister T M Thomas Isaac presented the budget with a focus on the heritage projects.

### Muziris Heritage Project

The Muziris Heritage Project (MHP) is one project whose commissioning will provide a big push to heritage tourism. In his budget speech, Isaac had announced that MHP will be commissioned in the 2020-21 fiscal year. Once this happens, 21 heritage sites, including 14 museums, will be opened to tourists and history researchers. Several religious sites, including ancient temples, churches and mosques, palac-

### OTHER HERITAGE PROJECTS

Thalassery heritage project announced last year is currently in process. Under it several epic monuments and tour destination at Thalassery will be developed. The `100-crore Travancore heritage project is another major project, which has been allotted `10 crore. Kerala Tourism recently invited bids for selecting consultants for preparing the concept plan and detailed project report.

es and historical buildings are being renovated under MHP.

"The profit of Muziris company will be utilised to help school study groups to visit the sites," said P M Noushad, managing director of Muziris Project Ltd (MPL).

MPL, which is overseeing the implementation of heritage projects, is confident MHP can be commissioned by the deadline Isaac announced. "We have two more works - at Munakkal beach and the Maritime Museum near the Pattanam excavation site - to complete as part of MHP. We can complete them by this year," he said.

### Alappuzha and Ponnani heritage projects

MPL has been tasked with developing Alappuzha and Ponnani heritage projects. As much as ₹200 crore has been set aside for the Alappuzha project, including ₹122 crore from the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB). The Alappuzha heritage project includes renovation/construction of 21 museums, beautification of the city, conservation of the pier at Alappuzha beach and construction of a new pier.

The master plan for the Ponnani heritage project is being

prepared. "In Alappuzha, five projects, including the yarn museum, coir museum, Gandhi museum and port museum, are nearing completion and can be opened this year itself. Tender process for work of other museums is on," said an official.

### Spice Route project

Spice Route is one of the most promising projects of Kerala Tourism on the cards. It proposes participation of 31 countries which had trade links with Kerala. Kerala Tourism had held discussions with Unesco which expressed interest in collaborating with the state for developing Spice Route. "Talks with the Netherlands are at an advanced stage. The project has been included in the Dutch Port Network in which 10 countries are members. It will help share knowledge about the ancient 'spice route,'" said P M Noushad.