

# NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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With 3 coaches, the train will let 45 tourists to enjoy the beauty of Veli village in one ride

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CHIEF Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday launched the country's first solar energy-driven miniature train at Veli Tourist Village here.

The train which will chug along a 2.5km rail route will enable tourists to enjoy the scenic beauty of the destination located on the outskirts of the capital.

"The ₹10-crore project is the first such venture in the country," said the chief minister via video conferencing.

"The train has been modelled after the vintage steam locomotive. The station house has also been designed in a traditional style. The surplus energy generated by the system will be routed to the KSEB's grid," the chief minister said.

The rail route also boasts of



The solar-powered train that was launched at Veli Tourist Village on Monday

a tunnel and a ticket booking office. The train with three coaches, can accommodate around 45 persons at a time. Meanwhile, an urban park set up at a cost of ₹5 crore and a swimming pool village costing ₹2.5 crore were also dedicated to the public on the day.

Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran who presided over the function said the government had allotted ₹60 crore for the renovation of the Veli

Tourist Village alone.

"This year, the government sanctioned ₹120 crore for the tourism sector, of which ₹60 crore was allotted to Veli. This shows the government's determination to transform Veli into one of the most sought-after destinations for domestic tourists. So far, ₹20 crore worth of projects have been completed. The work on other facilities is progressing. We hope to commission the Tourist Facilita-

tion Centre at the tourist village in January," Surendran said.

A convention centre equipped with an art gallery, digital display facility to feature major tourism and cultural centres of the state and an open-air theatre, along with an Art Cafe will also be set up at Veli soon.

V S Sivakumar MLA, Mayor K Sreekumar and M Vijayakumar, chairman, KTDC, also participated in the function.