

# TRAVEL TRADE JOURNAL

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**K**erala Chief Minister Shri Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated India's first solar energy-driven Miniature Railway at Veli Tourist Village on November 2 as part of a string of projects totaling Rs 60 crore to elevate the facilities at the panoramic destination to international standards.

The Chief Minister also dedicated the Urban Park and swimming pool at the eco-friendly tourist Village, located on the outskirts of the state capital where the Veli Lake meets the Arabian sea. "The eco-friendly solar-powered 2.5 km miniature railway will enable visitors to enjoy the beauty of nature. The Rs 10-crore project is the first of its kind in the country. Artificial steam spouted by the engine of the train, modeled after the vintage steam locomotive, will stir nostalgic feelings. The station house is also designed in a traditional style. The surplus energy generated by the system will be routed to the KSEB's grid," the Chief Minister said in his address via videoconference.

A tourist facilitation centre, Convention Centre and Art Cafe are also to be opened at Veli soon. The Convention Centre will have an art gallery, a digital display facility to feature major tourism and cultural centres of the state, and an open-air theatre. These world-class facilities will impart a new look to Veli.

The Tourism Minister Shri Surendran noted that the Government had allotted around Rs 120 crores for the tourism sector in one year alone. Of these, administrative sanction has been given to Rs 60-crore worth of projects for Veli itself. This showed the Government's determination to transform Veli into one of the most attractive destinations for domestic tourists. Among the projects for Veli, Rs 20 crores worth of works have been completed, and other schemes are progressing. The Tourist Facilitation Centre will be opened in January.

The Miniature Rail has all the features of a fully-equipped rail system including a tunnel, station and ticket office. The train, a joy for children especially, has three bogies that can accommodate around 45 persons on board at a time.