

## Kerala Tourism ready to launch first phase of Muziris Heritage project with four museums

STEENA JOY – Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Tourism is set to launch the first phase of its ambitious Muziris Heritage project with four museums part of a total of 25 museums concentrated near Fort Kochi and Kodungalloor formerly known as Muziris, an ancient port town of Kerala. Speaking exclusively to **Express TravelWorld**, Rani George, director, Kerala Tourism informed, "The Muziris Heritage project encompasses monuments and archaeological sites from a significant era in the history of Kerala. We wanted to develop this project on the lines of the Silk Route. The Pattanam excavation site has revealed that these areas were part of the Spice Route used for spice trading by the Dutch, Portuguese, Chinese and the Arabs centuries ago. The heritage site has revealed a lot of synagogues which we have started renovating and converting into museums. A lot of artifacts have been discovered in the Paliyam Palace belonging to the Paliyam family (an ancient Nair family, Paliyam

was the biggest joint Hindu family in the erstwhile Cochin state of Kerala) and they are being prepared for display in the palace which will also be converted into a museum. Another building of the family, Paliyam Nalukettu, will be showcased as a house of that era so that the public can have a glimpse of the life in that period."

She added, "A total of four museums will be opened in the first phase. Along with this we are developing boat jetties and a facilitation centre as we want visitors to go around the place in boats which would have halts at different locations. The Kottapuram Market Place is also being developed. The Chennamangalam synagogue and the Anapapani North synagogue are also being developed as museums. Some of the houses of rich families of that era are being renovated and restored. Excavations are mainly being carried out in the Patapuram and the Kottapuram areas and whatever has been excavated will also be displayed in the museum and the excavation sites will also be opened to the public."



Rani George

Kerala Tourism recently won the National Award for its Kumrakom Rural Tourism project, part of its responsible tourism initiative. The tourism board now plans to take up

rural tourism in other destinations like Kovalam, Wayanad and Thekkady. Later Bekal and Kumbalangi will be added to the project. Commenting on developing northern Kerala as an integrated tourism circuit, George said, "Most destination development so far has been concentrated in central and south Kerala. But there are many places in the north which can be converted into tourist attractions. Bekal which is in Kasargod district is just one of them. So for all the northern districts we are developing an integrated tourism circuit which will include Wayanad, Kannur, Malapuram, Kozhikode and Kasargod. That is being developed right now. It is getting ready. Maybe next year we may see it getting implemented. Besides that new properties are coming up, constructions are going on. We are promoting these destinations through fairs and road shows, domestic as well as international. We are also supporting Bekal through some infrastructure development mainly support for power supply, water supply, etc." ■