ROYAL CHARM OF TRAVANCORE KINGDOM TO BE REVIVED

The project also proposes to illuminate city landmarks with state-of-the-art technology

AIMING to showcase the cultural richness of the erstwhile Travancore kingdom, the state government is set to launch a ₹100-crore Travancore Heritage Tourism Project (THTP) that envisages conservation of the region’s palaces, mansions and temples. The project will ensure that the old-world charm of the structures is retained, besides illuminating city landmarks with state-of-the-art techniques for greater visual appeal in the evenings.

THTP covers heritage structures in the southern part of the former kingdom, from the Padmanabhapuram palace - now in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu - to the Parthasarathy temple on the banks of the Pampa in Aranmula of Pathanamthitta district.

The first phase will be carried out in four stages across Thiruvananthapuram district, giving a fillip to tourism development. Mumbai-based architectural firm Abha Narain Lambah Associates, which is into the conservation of several historical sites across India, has drafted the plan.

“The Travancore Heritage Tourism Project is an attempt to highlight the hidden jewels of the erstwhile kingdom and give a boost to tourism, creating a new circuit for visitors to explore Kerala,” said Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran.

At the centre of the project is the Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple and the adjoining areas with remnants of its fort wall, temple pond, streets lined with historically and architecturally important structures, shopping areas and the contemporary streets. As part of the project, the Secretariat will be beautified with an advanced laser show. It will throw light on the political history of Kerala.

THTP has also charted the renovation of the Kilimanoor palace that gave birth to world-famous artist Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906). Centuries old stone structures like Arattu Mandapam at Shankhumukham beach and the rock-cut cave at Vizhinjam have been made part of the heritage circuit.

Apart from the monuments associated with the royal period, the circuit includes structures like Anjengo Fort, a trade settlement of East India Company down south, and the remnants of the 18th century Portuguese-built St Thomas Fort at Thangassery in Kollam. By conserving and renovating the heritage monuments of the Travancore belt, THTP seeks to attract more international tourists.

The project has also brought into its ambit heritage institutional buildings in the city, most of which are still functional, like the State Central Library, Ayyanarkal Hall (previously known as VIT Hall), University College and the Post Master General (PMG) building.