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THE SHOW MUST GO ON

TOURISM DEPARTMENT GETS NOD TO RESUME MAKEOVER WORK AT VELI TOURIST VILLAGE

Shainu Mohan

Despite the ongoing Covid crisis and flood threat, the state government has given the go-ahead for a number of development projects in the tourism sector, one of which is the resumption of the ₹34-crore project to revamp Veli Tourist Village — a popular destination among domestic and international tourists alike — which was stalled due to the lockdown.

A senior official with the tourism department said the department is planning to welcome back tourists with state-of-the-art facilities. However, the advent of monsoon might pose a challenge during construction. "We have resumed work in the tourist village. The work of the multipurpose fa-

cilitation centre has kicked off and we plan to inaugurate the centre by September," said a senior official with the tourism department. The official also said that the tourist village's ₹10-crore convention centre will be ready by December.

The shell-shaped facilitation centre will provide a slew of amenities like washrooms, cloakroom, first-aid room, lounge, ticket counter etc.

"The two-storey facilitation centre will be constructed using traditional construction materials and will be barrier free so that it's accessible to everyone," says Josna Raphael, architect of Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS) — the agency implementing the project.

She said there will be a bridge connecting the convention and facilitation centres.

"There is a stream between both centres. Hence, we will construct a small bridge across the stream," said Josna, who is also a professor of architecture at the Government Engineering College, Thrissur.

Work of miniature train resumes

The work of the first-ever narrow-gauge miniature train,

which will come up at Veli Tourist Village, has resumed. The ₹9-crore project is expected to give a total facelift to the tourist village. The 1.5-km-long rail route is expected to provide tourists with a 20-minute ride-filled with scenic beauty.

"The major work is the erection of the prefabricated rail bridge connecting Pozhikkara and Veli Tourist Village. The only obstruction now is the rain. Once the bridgework is over, we will bring the coaches, which are ready for delivery," said the official. The bridge, which will pass parallel to the floating bridge in Veli, will be 65m long.

According to tourism authorities, giving world-class services and amenities is the only way to get the tourism sector, which nose-dived following the pandemic, back on track.



3D images of the convention centre (top left), facilitation centre (top right) and interior of the facilitation centre

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—Josna Raphael, architect, ULCCS

