

THE HINDU

Veli gets a toy train that saves energy

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Country's first solar-powered miniature train at the eco-friendly tourist village

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The country's first solar energy-driven miniature railway at Veli was commissioned by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as part of a string of projects to elevate the tourist village to world-class standards.

The Urban Park and swimming pool at the eco-friendly tourist village, located on the outskirts of the capital where the Veli lake meets the Arabian sea, was also commissioned by the Chief Minister on Monday.

"The solar-powered 2.5-km miniature railway will enable all kinds of visitors to enjoy the beauty of nature. The ₹10-crore project is the first-of-its-kind in the country," the Chief Minister said in his address via videoconference.

Vintage look

Artificial steam spouted by the locomotive of the train, modelled after the vintage steam locomotive, will stir nostalgic feelings. The station house is also designed in a traditional style. "The surplus energy generated by



A solar-powered toy train at the Veli Tourist Village making its inaugural trip on Monday with Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran and other dignitaries on board. *S. MAHINSHA

the system will be routed to the KSEB's grid," he said.

A tourist facilitation centre, convention centre, and art cafe are also to be opened at the tourist village soon. The convention centre will have an art gallery, digital display facility to feature major tourism and cultural centres, and an open air theatre. These world-class facilities would impart a new

look to Veli, he said.

Tourism Minister, Kadakampally Surendran, who presided, noted that the government had allotted around ₹120 crore for tourism sector in one year alone. Of these, administrative sanction had been given to ₹60-crore worth of projects for Veli.

Among the projects for Veli, ₹20 crore worth of

works were completed, and other schemes were progressing. The Tourist Facilitation Centre would be opened in January, Mr. Surendran said.

The miniature rail had all the features of a fully equipped rail system including a tunnel, station, and ticket office. The train had three bogies that could accommodate around 45 per-

sons on board at a time. The Urban Park entailed a budget of ₹5 crore and the swimming pool ₹2.5 crore. V.S. Sivakumar, MLA, Mayor K. Sreekumar, and M. Vijayakumar, chairman KTDC, Tourism Secretary Rani George, P. Bala Kiran, K. Rajkumar, Joint Director, Tourism, KTIL CMD K.G. Mohanlal, and TourFed Chairmani C. Ajayakumar attended.