

KERALA

Fillip for heritage scheme

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*Aims at conserving historical sites in Muziris area**The port had trade ties with Rome, China, Arabia*

KOCHI: With the approval by the State Cabinet on Wednesday for the Muziris Heritage Site (MHS), the heritage conservation-cum-tourism project that centres on the ancient Muziris port, believed to have been located at Kodungalloor, has crossed a crucial hurdle.

Detailed work plans of the project is already in place and the Cabinet nod will now be followed by a Government Order, which will authorise departments to get involved. The Cabinet has approved an expenditure of Rs.140 crore. Of this, Rs. 67.75 crore will be the Centre's contribution; Rs.62.25 crore by various departments in addition to the Rs. 10 crore earmarked in the 2009-10 State budget.

The project will be headquartered at the Kunjikuttan Thampuran College, Kodungalloor. There will be a three-tier monitoring system for the project. The first, a coordination committee, will be headed by the Tourism Minister and will have six other Ministers, the principal secretaries of Finance and Higher Education and the Tourism Secretary as members.

For time-bound implementation and coordination among agencies, there will be a monitoring group of senior officials that will be headed by the Tourism secretary. The third tier will be a special implementation team which will supervise the grassroots-level implementation. A special officer in the rank of an executive engineer will be in charge of the team.

Apart from these, there will be a project evaluation committee at the local level with the Tourism Minister as chairman. The Finance Minister and other Ministers hailing from the project area, and heads of local bodies will be members of this committee. Reputed

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assigned the project.

The MHS will cover North Paravur and Kodungalloor municipalities and eight grama panchayats in Thrissur and Ernakulam. The project aims at conserving a lot of historical and cultural sites in the Muziris area. The port which lasted from a few centuries before Christ to the 14th century was an important commercial centre that had trade relations with ancient Rome, China, Arabia and the Mediterranean. The ongoing excavations at Pattanam have thrown up a lot of evidence underscoring the port's prominence.

Now that the Cabinet has approved it, the work on the MHS will get a fillip, officials said. Already, the project is at least two months behind the earlier timeline.