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MUZIRIS NEWS

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INDIA'S FIRST MOSQUE, THE CHERAMAN JUMA MASJID AT KODUNGALLUR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN BUILT IN 629 AD. THE CONSERVATION OF THIS HISTORIC MASJID OCCUPIES A SIGNIFICANT PLACE IN MUZIRIS PROJECTS LTD.



message



Dear friends,

The abundance of nature, tradition, literacy, culture and the rich and varied history of Kerala magnetizes the world towards it. The state positions itself not just as a tourist destination, but as a celebration of all these. Kerala showcases its heritage to the world through a panoply of events every year. Handpicked from a vibrant palette and transferred onto the cultural map of the land, these events infuse life into all alike. The Champions Boat League which will decide its champion this month, is a massive example of this.

Muziris Projects Ltd is credited with a host of splendid heritage structures, across its region. It will more precisely be known for its efforts to captivate visitors through education and entertainment. For one to pursue heritage, a strong understanding of its people, communities and history is a core component. Muziris Projects Ltd is all set to mark the start of the 'Heritage Week' celebration from 19th November to 25th November 2019. With the objective of creating respect towards our heritage, and the relevance of preserving museums to this end, Muziris tries to ensure active participation from both school and college students.

It is only fitting that the destinations chosen for the same are among the most vibrant museums of heritage in Kerala- the two synagogues at Paravur and Chendamangalam, the Paliyam palace and nalukettu and the site museum at Kottappuram fort. Exhibitions, activities related to traditional crafts of the region and competitions will add charm to the venture. Thus, a tailored action plan will impart a sense of exploring the land's heritage, in each student.

I am extremely happy and proud that such events from the Dept of Tourism not only aim at promoting the exchange of knowledge, but also strengthen the cooperation of all age groups and communities alike.

Let us wholeheartedly support such ventures that value preservation and caring of heritage places for long into the future.

With best wishes,

P Bala Kiran IAS

Director - Tourism, Government of Kerala

SHARING CULTURAL HERITAGE



Preservation and conservation of historic moments, sites and experiences in shared heritage sector is greatly valued today. Collaborations among partner countries and the country in which the heritage resides strengthen this process.

Netherlands traces links with other countries and cultures, or a shared history, among them Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Suriname, Sri Lanka, the US and South Africa. India has a long cultural relationship with the Dutch on account of European colonization. The most striking effects of the Dutch rule in Kerala is visible in Kochi, with the sea port town of Muziris showcasing much of it.

The Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network (DTPHN), established in 2015 is an international network of institutions representative of the earlier Dutch historic ports around Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries. The agency provides a platform for researchers to exchange knowledge on the different heritage sites. They form step-by-step plans to contribute to the sustainable preservation of shared cultural heritage.

The 5th meeting of the DTPHN at the historic city of Melaka in Malaysia gathered all the founding members and Muziris Heritage Project, its newest member from India. The Network now includes 13 member organizations from 7 Asian countries.



AGE OF RESTORATION

Throughout history, all religions have built shrines and memorials, making them their sacred places for prayer. These, as ages go by, also become enlightening assets to the vibrant heritage and culture of the land they represent.

Muziris Projects Ltd, fully comprehends this and is a project explicitly designed for heritage conservation. Practically, Muziris restores all those aspects of history in its region. The Cheraman Juma Masjid in Kodungallur, as anyone can discover, teems with history and culture. Given its historical connections, the Masjid has gained a pivotal position in the project. Muziris has thus always acknowledged and strives to restore the heritage character of its region.

Restoring the original character of any monument is not an easy task. The Cheraman masjid, believed to be built in 629 AD, and having undergone several renovations and restorations over centuries, is getting a facelift through the Muziris Projects Ltd.

It is considered to be the first Masjid built in India. Over the years, it has stood as a testament to Kerala's ability to assimilate different cultures, beliefs and traditions under one roof. The oral tradition is that Cheraman Perumal, the Chera king, went to Arabia where he met the Prophet and embraced Islam. From there he had sent letters with Malik Ibn Dinar to his relatives in Kerala, asking them to be courteous to the latter. Thus it is believed that the Masjid

was built by Malik Ibn Dinar.

A lot of additions were made to the original structure, which made the architecture an eclectic mix of Keralite features and elements borrowed directly from Middle Eastern architecture. By way of introducing numerous elements including architectural details and the addition of a new museum making it the state's first Islamic heritage museum, the Masjid will also retain its original character.

On Sunday, November 10, 2019, Kodungallur witnessed a momentous event when the Hon'ble Governor of Kerala Shri Arif Mohammed Khan inaugurated the restoration of the masjid, under the initiative of Muziris Projects Ltd.

'The Cheraman Juma Masjid at Kodungalloor, India's first-ever mosque, gives a great message of communal harmony and our rich cultural heritage to the world', said the Hon'ble Governor at the inaugural ceremony. Hon'ble Minister for Finance Dr T M Thomas Isaac presided over the function.

Shri Benny Behanan MP,
 Adv V R Sunil Kumar, MLA, Kodungallur, Shri Bala Kiran IAS,
 Director- Tourism, Shri K R Jaithran, Kodungallur Municipal
 Chairman,
 Dr P A Mohamed Sayeed, President, Cheraman Juma
 Masjid Committee, Norka Roots Vice Chairman
 Shri M A Yousuf Ali, Muziris Heritage Projects Conservation

Consultant Dr Benny Kuriakose, Smt Asha Letha, Councillor, Shri P M Nowshad, MD, Muziris Projects Ltd spoke on the occasion.

On a whole, the venture will turn out to be an acknowledgement of the legacy the Masjid has stood for.

Excerpts from the Hon'ble Governor's speech :



'We are today meeting on a very auspicious day. People in Kerala, in India and the world over are celebrating Eid Milad Un Nabi, ie, the birth of the Holy Prophet...

On this occasion, I pray and I wish, like the Scripture describes the Holy Prophet as Mercy to all the World, not Mercy only to the believers, not mercy to those who believe Him, but Mercy to all the world, which is not only human beings, but also animals, insects, birds, trees...

So, on this occasion, it would be appropriate if I pray and express my

wish that all of us become source of mercy, compassion and kindness for each other. We take the inspiration and we become beneficial to each other, we have sensitivity towards each other.

It gives me great joy to address this gathering after laying the foundation stone for the conservation project at this historic site at Kodungallur which is known to be the first mosque in India and the oldest in the sub continent... I must thank the Honorable Finance Minister, the Muziris Projects since they asked me to lay the foundation stone for the conservation of this mosque. And since I received this invitation, I thought about it , I felt like I was travelling back into history... When Dr Benny Kuriakose came to Raj Bhavan, and the powerpoint presentation he shared with me, I was enthralled, totally engrossed...

This project, I find, is of great significance, great importance and since they have invited to travel back into the history and I started imagining how a noble king from Kerala travels to Arabia, Mecca, he spends time there and then decides to come back with the intention to build this mosque and he passes away on the way back and those who were coming with him, they complete the journey and they fulfil his last wish.

All of us who are present here can

actually imagine this and feel the importance of the event in which is our good fortune that we are participants in this event.

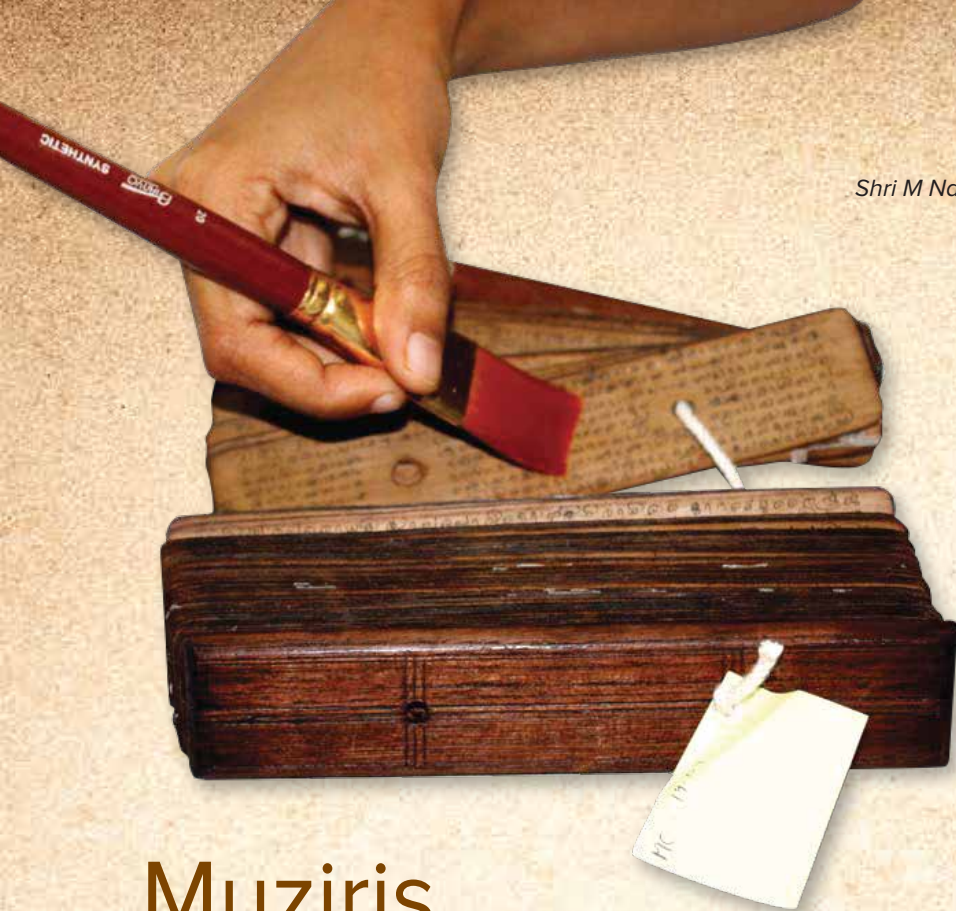
So, surely this is not an ordinary event. The project is carried out as part of the Muziris Heritage Projects which is a laudable effort on the part of the Dept of Tourism, Govt of Kerala to conserve important heritage sites in this state. The town of Kodungallur and this ancient mosque form an integral part of the Muziris Heritage Project. I would therefore highly commend the efforts of the Tourism dept of the Kerala govt which is great potential in the preservation of heritage sites for the whole world to see.

As we all know, conserving and showcasing our culture, that existed centuries ago is what this Heritage Project is all about. And reminds us of the wise saying: 'the farther back you can look, the farther forward you can see'.

The project makes us aware that even 2500 years ago, Kerala had established itself as a major centre for spice with the ancient port of Muziris as its hub attracting the Greeks, Romans, Arabs and the rest of the world.

He concluded with the message : 'All religions are one. The aim of religion is man's goodness. Wishing goodness to everyone...





*A discussion with
Shri M Narayanan Namboothiri,
Consultant, Muziris
Conservation Lab*



Muziris CONSERVATION LAB

Muziris Projects Ltd houses museums and monuments that respect its built legacy by adapting and restoring it at every turn. One can see that in the palaces where the Prime Ministers of the erstwhile Kings of Kochi lived, in the excavated fort at Kottappuram that will soon turn into a happening site museum, in the one-day cruise across the network of waterways in the region, in the Indo-Dutch architectural structures at the markets, all which tries to bring back that extraordinary era of trade. Thus, every monument here is an object of knowledge.

Predictably, for a place or a project that is so heritage - packed, 'conservation' is not a small thing. Obeying every bit of the art of 'restoration', an art restorer with more than 30 years of expertise in the industry, Shri M Narayanan Namboothiri heads the Muziris conservation lab activities as a consultant. The office with facilities for restoration processes functions in

North Paravur.

'It is a meticulous process. It is also a continuous process. Though our people still are not aware of the need for restoration, in due course, I am sure, they will realise the importance of it. Muziris is full of stories about the past, which requires the need for restoration', says Namboothiri. In restoration, the 'identity' of the object is of prime importance. 'What is it made of and how is it made' are the initial and the most significant questions to be answered.

Before Independence itself, in 1943, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) started collecting the works for restoration. In 1946, chemists Dr Khan Bahadur and Dr B B Lal started collecting works from various monuments on a frequent basis. ASI set up a small lab in Dehra Dun for excavated materials, followed by a small lab in Madras for catering to the artefacts in South India. The second phase of this activity saw Pandit Nehru inaugurating an art exhibition in UK in

1949 and making a visit to a few restoration labs, which eventually created an awareness about conservation of museums in India. In 1960, National museum, New Delhi opened with a conservation lab, announcing a major landmark in conservation. In 1972, it became the Central lab for all museums in India.

Talking about 'conservation', it started with long voyages in ancient times itself, when continents were covered through journeys across the waters. The ships required restoration before setting sail. Temples too conserved their objects, without comprehending the science behind it. It was after the Second World War and the Industrial Revolution that scientific studies were held in this area.

Any authority in this industry will always advise one to be aware of the 'age of the object' in one's sub conscious mind, while dealing with an artefact. For the same reason, the process should involve documenting each phase of it, before, during and after restoration.

There are two process in conservation

- Preventive Conservation
- Curative conservation

Preventive Conservation mainly focusses on the studies of the reason behind the cause of deterioration varying from climatic fluctuations, humidity,

temperature and pollution etc. Curative conservation on the other hand involves treating the object with appropriate chemicals and various other substances to regain it's original Chemical and Physical strength .

During the flood (2018) many artifacts were damaged in the

Muziris region. On requisition from Paliyam Tharavadu, the Muziris conservation lab collected 29 palm leaves in a highly damaged condition. And immediate attention in the form of preventive conservation (removal of mud, separation of leaves from the damped condition etc) was done at the lab in former space at Pullut. Later, they were all shifted to the new lab at Paravur on 23 rd September. Out of this, 12 palm leaves have already been scientifically conserved using appropriate methods, that followed photographic documentation in each step.

Conservation means to regain the physical and chemical strength of an artifact and it is not at all a beautification process.

(Narayanan Namboothiri is also a guest faculty at the Centre for Heritage Studies (CHS) and an award holder of senior fellowship (two years) for outstanding person in the field of Visual Arts (in Conservation) from Ministry of Culture, Government of India New Delhi).

The Portuguese



Long ago, trade with more than 30 countries flourished through these waters and roads of Kodungallur. Bearing witness to the restoration of this renowned area of trade, the ‘Portuguese’ is a charming eatery tucked away in the corner of the Kottappuram waterfront. The name, the most apt name for it considering its location close to the Portuguese built Kottappuram fort, is a reminder of the bygone era. Adorned with revocative interiors and wall paintings, the eco-friendly ambience here is too genuine.

‘We cater to all alike, the domestic and international travellers. Muziris Projects runs a group package for its visitors taking a boat ride, and we serve them lunch, which is part of the package. As the project aims, we need to connect our guests with the region’s history. From the restuarant, one could see the region stretching

away into the distance, like into the distant past. The whole ambience is part of that’, says Suveesh, Dipin I A and Jitheesh T J, the team who runs the place.

The place has a restaurant, cafeteria and party hall with a seating capacity of 60, open from 12noon to 10 pm on all days.

The Chef Bijoy Sau and his open live kitchen has attended to many including a scholarly team from Portugal recently, making it memorable.

‘People enjoy the location very much, being water-facing. They say its more or less like a floating restaurant. We never switch on the fans nor do we have AC. Added to this is the ample parking area. So, altogether, after the market area, it’s a different place and that’s why people fondly call it ‘Kodungallur’s Marine Drive’, concludes Suveesh.

INAUGURATION OF NEW BOAT JETTY



Characterised by ‘heritage conservation’, Muziris Projects Ltd strictly follows a harmonious coexistence of nature, history and culture. History overhangs each and every monument and its premises here. Visitors are welcomed to follow the traditions and take on a boat ride. Hop – on hop- off boat packages are available which connects Paravur, Pallippuram, Kottappuram, Azhikode, Munambam and Gothuruth. The ride starts in the morning from any of the boat jetties at Paravur and Kottappuram waterfront to end by 5pm. Travellers not only experience the beauty of a ride across the serene waters, but also enjoy the simple rural landscape and life of the Muziris region, along with visiting all the museums included in the package.

Added to the existing boat jetties that are functional, four more boat jetties are nearing completion. Among them, the newly constructed boat jetty near the pilgrim centre at Azhikode Mar Thoma church was formally inaugurated on Sunday November 10th, 2019 by Hon'ble Minister for Forests Shri K Raju.

E T Taison Master, MLA, Kaipamangalam, presided over the function.

The other jetties nearing completion are at Gothuruthu, Pallippuram and near Thiruvanchikulam temple, Kodungallur.

WALK THROUGH HISTORY FEST



mangalam handloom, exhibitions on the local Jewish culture, an art show, and an archaeology gallery featuring excavated artefacts.

The inauguration of the fest was held on 19th November, 2019 at the Muziris Cheraman Parambu Activity centre. 'Informal education will help students gain new insights through experiential learning', said Prof Kesavan Veluthat, renowned historian, academician and Director of the Institute for Studies in the Heritage of Coastal Kerala (ISHCK). He emphasised the importance of informal education in providing students a chance to experience the various facets of heritage, meaningfully.

School students, the main beneficiaries of the event, the Project believes will take a walk along history, that is bound with the goal of gaining knowledge on heritage and its preservation.

To think of the heritage spaces as alive, to think of their history relevant at all times, it definitely needs a 'walk' through history.

The word 'Muziris' is engrossed in tales of the past. Oral and written traditions have defined its history that lasted for three millennia till it perished in the massive flood of 1340. Muziris is rather the history of a great civilization, restored and conserved.

UNESCO celebrates the annual World Heritage Week from November 19 to 25 across countries. The whole concept of preserving cultural heritages and monuments is of utmost importance here. To engage and educate the students and general public alike, Muziris Projects Ltd has organised a heritage festival, a week-long cultural affair at the selected heritage sites of Muziris. Besides public awareness classes, exhibitions and activity based initiatives, the heritage week will also offer an opportunity to visit the historical museums.

The week additionally gives entry to a workshop on the Kottappuram Integrated Development Society (KIDS) making household articles using organic fibre, a show on traditional weaving from Chenda-



**WORLD
HERITAGE
WEEK**
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▶ EVENTS OF THE MONTH

1. Ms Jinna Smit, Program Director, Cultural Heritage Agency of Netherlands, interacted with the Muziris Projects Ltd team members at the Head office in Pullut. She appreciated the huge effort and commitment of the team to preserving the heritage of the land, maintaining the coastal cultural landscape and the traces of the past for future generations.



2. Dr M V Nair (second from left), former Director of State Archaeology dept, Kerala and Former Registrar of National Museum Institute, Delhi at the Muziris Projects Ltd office in Pullut with Sri M Narayanan Namboothiri, consultant - Muziris conservation lab, Dr Benny Kuriakose, conservation consultant, Muziris heritage Project., Sri P M Nowshad, MD, Muziris Projects Ltd and Ms Jinna Smit, Program Director, Cultural Heritage Agency of Netherlands.

3. Alappuzha Heritage Project, an initiative under Muziris Projects Ltd witnessed another momentous occasion commemorating the fighters of the Punnapra Vayalar uprising. Seven decades after the strike, it was befitting to felicitate veterans like Medini and Harilal, at a ceremony on the occasion of 'kudumba sangamom' of 200 families of fighters of the revolt, from Mannanchery panchayat. A directory providing details of them was also launched by Hon'ble Minister for Finance Dr T M Thomas Isaac.

