

Zero waste centre to go on stream from June

By S. Anil Radhakrishnan

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Zero Waste Centre (ZWC), a resource and training centre evolved from the need to complement the efforts of Kerala Tourism's ambitious Rs. 71 lakh Zero Waste Kovalam Project to restore the old charm of the famed beach resort and regain its position in World tourism map, is to become fully operational from June.

Besides upgrading the skills and taking up product and design development, the zero waste centre that has been established at Azhakulam junction near Kovalam will be the hub of innovations in materials substitution and will create environment awareness in the community, among students and policy-makers.

Being set up at a cost of Rs. 15 lakhs, the centre will take up capacity building for interested people in production of sustainable products, provide marketing space for such products, generate surplus from sale proceeds to help more ventures and will be a non-profit centre for the community. Besides, the centre will act as a museum for sustainable products and craft-works.

The centre is part of the ongoing programme of Thanal Conservation Action and Information Network, an NGO and is supported by Kerala Tourism, Greenpeace, Global Alliance for Incineration Alternatives, the Kovalam unit of the Kerala Hotel and Restaurants Association (KHRA) and the Venganoor panchayat. The Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology

(IHMCT) has been appointed as the nodal agency for the project.

"Training programmes on coconut shell crafts, cloth and tailor waste and paper products have already commenced at the ZWC. Of the Rs. 15 lakhs needed for the venture, Kerala Tourism is providing Rs. 2.5 lakhs", C. Jayakumar of Thanal told *The Hindu*.

Apart from these, the zero waste centre will facilitate training in eco-friendly printing and dyeing, production of bamboo-based products, production of areca sheath products, setting up biogas plants and Resource Recovery Facility, compost, vermi-compost and non-chemical farming practices.

Leadership training programmes will also form an important part of the centre's activity. This will include management, communication, and accounting skills as well as other skills needed to take innovative initiatives forward. The setting up of the centre will help the panchayats who wanted to link up waste to wealth programme as part of waste management.

The ZWC, will have an advisory board, which will have experts within the country and abroad, to guide the work. A nine-member steering committee, which consists of local representatives, officials and experts in the field, will guide the admissions to the training and awareness programmes.

Meanwhile, the work for setting up biogas plants behind the Light House beach in Kovalam has begun. The plants are being set up by the local unit of

the KHRA with the support of the department and IHMCT in the land donated by KHRA members.

The department is providing a sum of Rs. 9.5 lakhs for the construction of the two plants, each which can handle 500 to 600 kgs of waste daily, in northern and southern side of the beach. The amount includes the cost for setting up a 4,000 KVA generator.

"The work for the biogas plant on the northern side of the beach near Hotel Peacock has commenced and the work for the second plant at Vaykolulam will begin next week", according to the KHRA local president, G. Sudhiesh Kumar.

The Igloo shaped biogas plants are to be completed before monsoon and will be able to handle 1,000 kgs of waste on a daily basis. The third plant being set up by the KHRA is near Jasmine Palace. Once all the plants are commissioned, a total of 2,000 kgs of waste generated in the resort can be handled daily.

The hoteliers will be provided training in the IHMCT, which has been appointed as the nodal agency, soon to segregate the waste generated in the hotels and on the functioning of plants.

The Resource Recovery Facility, the pilot programme of the project, set up in the IHMCT to educate and create awareness on resource management and conservation was commissioned earlier this year. A Rs. 2.5 lakh Igloo shaped biogas plant, set up behind the IHMCT main building, with an intake capacity of 250 kg per day, has already gone on stream.