

KERALA'S DREAM PROJECT

WORK ON MISSION 676 PROJECT OF THE CHANDY GOVT. WILL BEGIN ON NOV. 1

Vizhinjam to become reality

S. Anil Radhakrishnan



A view of the Vizhinjam Harbour in Thiruvananthapuram. —FILE PHOTO: S. MAHINSHA

Kerala's dream project, Vizhinjam International Multipurpose Deepwater Seaport, is set to become a reality with the signing of the concession agreement between the State and Adani Vizhinjam Ports Ltd. (AVLP) of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. (APSEZ), the private multi-port operator selected to build the superstructure and operate the seaport.

The Durbar Hall of the Secretariat will be the venue for signing the agreement between CEO of AVPL Santosh Kumar Mahopatra and Principal Secretary of Ports James Varghese at 5 p.m. on Monday.

Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, Minister for Ports K. Babu, other Ministers, Chief Secretary Jiji Thomson, Group Chairman of APSEZ Gautam Adani, top officials, and leaders of industry, chamber of commerce, and travel trade will be present to witness the historic moment. Mr. Adani is being accompanied by an eight-member delegation.

The work on the Mission 676 project of the United Democratic Front (UDF) government headed by Mr. Chandy will commence on November 1, the Formation Day of the State, at Vizhinjam as oth-

er formalities had to be completed.

AVPL, the special purpose vehicle set up to execute the project, has already announced that the work will be completed within two years although a four-year deadline has been fixed for the Phase I, estimated to cost Rs. 7,525 crore.

The PPP share of the project is Rs. 4,089 crore and the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) from the Centre is Rs. 818 crore.

It was the June 10 Cabinet that decided to accept the sole bid submitted by Ahmedabad-based

APSEZ that was recommended by the board of Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited and the five-member empowered committee headed by Chief Secretary.

The port operator has sought Rs. 1,635 crore as grant for the project. Official sources said APSEZ was yet to give Rs. 120 crore as Performance Security. The contract is for building port superstructure and operating the port for 40 years, including the four years of construction. When completed, it would have the capacity to berth 18,000 TEU

mother ships.

The pact is being inked after overcoming several hurdles during the last 24 years, including the threat of a stir by Latin Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram demanding better rehabilitation package for the fisherfolk of Vizhinjam and adjacent areas and amidst boycott call of the function by Opposition Left Democratic Front (LDF).

In 1991, it was the late CMP leader and former Ports Minister M.V. Raghavan who took the initiative to develop Vizhinjam into a seaport.

As per gynaecologists,

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Bengaluru's wild side comes to the fore

Mohit M. Rao

BENGALURU: The highly urbanised environs of the city and its surroundings seem to still keep secrets when it comes to the animal kingdom.

In the Animal Discoveries 2014, released by the Zoological Society of India (ZSI), 14 new discoveries come from Bengaluru, and its outskirts, including Nandi Hills and Bidadi.

Highest among metros

This is the highest among comparable metros of Mumbai (two), Kolkata and Hyderabad (1 each) or even Delhi and Chennai (none on the list).

Surprisingly, the city's 'discoveries' form more than half of the animals discovered and described in Karnataka. In all, 27 new species of insects and amphibians (found in the lush Western Ghats forests) from the State are described in the list.

H.M. Yeshwanth, an insect taxonomist working from GKVK, who has five new insect discoveries from the State in the list, says there is much more to see and discover in urban Bengaluru itself. "In Hesarghatta grasslands, many people come for bird watching. But the insect varieties are tremendous too," he says.

Specialising in plant bugs, all his discoveries involve

critters of the genus Hypselococcus, which thrive on parasitic plants. "These insects are very small, barely 5mm and are found only on parasitic plants that grow on mango trees," says Mr. Yeshwanth.

Apart from GKVK, it is researchers of the National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Resources (NBAIR) in Hebbal that have contributed to the list.

Active eco-system

While the preserved green spaces here provide an active eco-system for in-

sects, Prashant Mohanraj, Head of the Division of Insect Systematics at NBAIR, says Bengaluru has the advantage of housing a large number of specialists in the field.

"It isn't like other cities do not have insects. Researchers specialising in tiny insects – which thrive in urban settings – are based in Bengaluru. And there are so many more of these species that can be discovered. We have discovered some insects on our office premises itself, where there is hardly any greenery," he says.

Amazing biodiversity

Mohit M. Rao

BENGALURU: Species which were found in Bengaluru in 2014: Parasitic wasps that lay eggs in plant bugs; *Caenohomalopoda albifuniculata* at Nandi Hills, Chikkaballapur; *Comperiella diversifasciata* in Nandi Hills, Chikkaballapur, Hessarghatta; *Hypselococcus articulatus* in Nandi Hills, Chikkaballapur.

Neocladia mira at Hebbal, Bengaluru; *Tetracnemoidea anomala* at Kengeri, Bengaluru; *Tyndarichus zenus* in Hebbal, Bengaluru; Thrips, which are found in bamboo stocks and often considered pests; *Bamboosiella venkataramani* at Kemchanakuppe, Bidadi, Karnataka.

Plant bugs found in parasitic plants which were seen for the first time in India: *Hypselococcus acutus* in Hessarghatta; *Hypselococcus articulatus* in Nandi Hills, Chikkaballapur, Hessarghatta; *Hypselococcus bellii* in GKVK, Bengaluru; *Hypselococcus orientale* found in Karahalli, Devanahalli; fruit flies feeding on bamboo; *Acroceratitis parasitaria* in Attur farm, Bengaluru; Fairy Flies: Small wasps (less than 5mm); *Stephanocampa indica* in Attur, Bengaluru.

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The canvassers would also inform the voters about how the State has been marching ahead on the path of progress in an unprecedented manner.

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