

Beach in Puducherry selected for blue flag certification

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PUDUCHERRY: The Union environment, forest and climate control ministry has proposed to seek 'blue flag certification' for at least one beach in each of the 13 coastal states and Union territories in the country under the World Bank-funded Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP).

Blue flag certification is accorded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education (FEE) to the beaches that fulfil 33 stringent criteria for reducing existing pollution, managing solid waste and marine litter, adopting eco-friendly measures, improving seawater quality for bathing, enhancing safety and security measures and promoting tourism and allied initiatives among others. Once the beaches receive blue flag certification, FEE will mention them in its global headquarters. The tourists, who are

familiar with blue flag certification and its standards, will plan their holidays in those countries.

The ministry's body – Society of integrated coastal management (Sicom) – in coordination with FEE launched a pilot coastal management project (Beams – Beach environment and aesthetics management services) to select beaches that can meet the requirements for blue flag certification in the country.

The society after undertaking extensive fieldwork has selected 13 beaches including one in Puducherry (Eden in Chinna Veerampattinam) for the globally-applauded blue flag beach certification.

The ministry launched a series of campaigns to realize the goal of attaining the eco-label for the selected beaches in the

country. The campaign in Puducherry was formally launched during the world environment day celebrations on Wednesday. The initiatives include massive cleaning of the beach with eco-friendly tools and equipment, segregating and recycling of garbage and imparting environment education to members of the local communities, fishermen societies and school children.

A team from the National centre for sustainable coastal management visited Puducherry a week ago and took seawater samples for checking the quality. The team also did a bathymetric survey to analyse under-seawater features and wave current and intensity.

If the survey results meet the blue flag criterion, the ministry will earmark 500m-800m stretch of the beach and will establish an effective solid waste management system, watch tower with experienced lifeguards to save people from drowning, bathing facilities at international standards besides providing clean drinking water through a reverse osmosis plant and installing solar power generating units.

The country has proposed to secure certification for 10 beaches in 2019-20. Shivrajpur (Dwarka in Gujarat) and Ghoghia (Daman & Diu) are ready for certification this season while four other beaches will be ready for certification by the next season. "The target is to develop at least 50 to 100 blue flag beaches in India in the next five years," said Sicom mission leader Sanjai Jalla.