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Raigam opens largest saltern in Trincomalee

The Sri Lankan salt industry is in for good times with the launch of the single largest saltern in the country by Raigam Eastern Salt Company.



The Kuchchaveli Saltern and A kovil being built by Raigam Eastern Salt Company. Pic: Thushara Fernando

Built on a 1805 acre land at Kuchchaveli in Trincomalee the saltern will produce 50,000 MT of salt a year which will be a saving on the huge drain on foreign exchange on imports.

The mega project which is at its initial stage is expected to be in full swing by end next year which will also provide livelihood to a large number of people in the area.

Developed on the 'salt base' concept which comprises salterns, refineries, distribution and eco-tourism the Eastern Saltern will be a bedrock for investors and woo tourists.

The country spends a staggering \$4,000,000 each year on the import of around 40,000 mt of salt.

The import of salt has dropped to around 10 percent from around 35 percent due to the boost in the local production. Raigam Saltern in Hambantota, Puttalam and now in the East will increase production of crystal salt thus meeting the demand in the country.

The salt industry is one of the major beneficiaries of the enormous natural resource that abounds the country. Sunlight which is freely available throughout is a blessing for the industry.

Chairman, Raigam Salterns, Dr. Ravi Liyanage said the current peaceful and the serene environment in the East is ideal for the saltern and eco-resort project will boost salt production and tourism in the country.

Hundred and fifty salt forming beds will be set up as feeding ground for birds by developing artimia which is a shrimp-like crustacean that grows in high density brine.

"Artimia will attract migratory birds to the area", a site officer said.

Bundala is a prime example of a countless number of birds which feed on the salt beds during winter.

"Vantage points will be chosen to set up chalets which will be in harmony with the saltern", the officer said.

A company spokesman said that they plan to develop facilities for hikes on elephant trails.

"Elephants in large herds congregate frequently in Kuchchaveli due to tourists in the area. The gathering of elephants will help attract visitors to the area", he said.

The company plans to build cabanas on the peripheral bund facing the jungle on the west of the saltern enabling visitors to watch elephants and other wildlife. "We hope to promote fishing and breed new varieties in the tanks" the spokesman said.

The company has commenced building a kovil and a sports complex to facilitate more participation of people in the area.

The Kuchchaveli saltern is the third saltern to be operated by the Raigam Group having obtained the land on lease from the government.

The other salterns are in Palaviya and Tangalle.

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