



THE BROTHERS GRIMM
STAR MOVIES
9:10 PM

TOMMY BOY
HBO
4:45 PM



LIFESTYLE

DEVELOPMENT OF A WETLAND CAN HAPPEN THIS WAY TOO, NURTURING IT THE WAY NATURE DOES



Guests at Marari Beach Resort try their hand at preparing avial with vegetables grown in the hotel's 3-acre vegetable garden



Solar panels for heating water for the entire cottages at Coconut Lagoon



A large area is set apart for rainwater harvesting. The collected water serves them until summer



The wetland is maintained as such with the inlets of water, the pools, the swamps and the canals



A huge paddy farm where paddy and prawns are cultivated in rotation, an adaptation of an age-old practice in Vembanad

God's Own WETLAND



PICS: Jipson Sikhera



Baskets made of split bamboo for collecting dry leaves



WATER moving in and out through the narrow creeks, caressing the mangrove roots on either side. Fishes and prawns dart around among the aquatic plants, hardly bothered by the wooden boats that ply in occasionally. Ripples form in water as a gentle breeze blows across.

If you thought that this is some untouched virgin land tucked away in God's Own Country, you are wrong. This is a resort owned by the Casino Group of Hotels at Kumarakom, where the Vembanad wetland is preserved at its best. No reclamation, no cutting down trees and no cosmetic changes for the Western clients. The canals and pools are open and often green

with algae, so are the marshy paddy farms, shrimp farms and the fish farms. And what is the most impressive about this resort is the way they have preserved nature here - it is almost a worship.

What took this reporter and Express photographer Jipson Sikhera to the CGH resorts was a startling discovery. On a fellowship from the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, to study the development pressures on the Vembanad wetland, we found that fisheries was one sector that was being severely affected by developmental pressures, be it the Thanneermukkom bund, the ICTT, industrial effluents, agricultural effluents or even dredging.

Several organisations, including the unit of ATREE at Alappuzha, were trying to set up fish sanctuaries and clam sanctuar-

ies. To our surprise, we found that one fish sanctuary set up by ATREE was actually financed by a resort in the tourism sector - the Coconut Lagoon. It was a surprise because the tourism industry is never known to be responsible enough to take care of the local environment.

Wherever we went, be it the ATREE office or the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) Kumarakom, there were a lot of people talking about the Coconut Lagoon's eco-initiatives that we could not afford not to see the place.

And when we did get to The

Coconut Lagoon, the contrast with other island resorts in Vembanad was so immense that we were first shocked, then bewildered which then gave way to growing respect and admiration. It was here that we realised that development could happen this way too - without hampering na-

ture. "What we give our customers is an experience, a kind of feel of living with nature that they might not get anywhere else. And most of our customers are repeat guests," said P. Subrahmanian, former general manager of the Coconut Lagoon Resort and currently the general manager of CGH Marari Beach at Alappuzha. Marari Beach Resort is also an eco-friendly hotel, that grows vegetables organically in a three-acre plot, without chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

Both these resorts use recycled water from the Vembanad Lake that flows into the hotel through a number of inlets. Not a drop of water is wasted and guests are advised to save water. "There are eight huge tanks for water treatment, including those with sand filters and carbon filters and after ultrafiltration, the water is

about 65-70 percent pure, which we use for flushing toilets and washing plates. The rest goes into the reverse osmosis unit and becomes just perfect for drinking. We describe the whole process to our guests too," said Jesson T. Das, naturalist at Coconut Lagoon. The resort also has a humongous rainwater harvesting system, that keeps them going till summer. Apart from the fluttering butterflies, what catches your eye in the garden are the heaps of fallen leaves stacked neatly, to be transferred to the compost pits. Manure is generated from the compost pits as well as a garbage treatment plant right on the premises. Through recycling, composting and organic farming, the environment is protected. Indeed, a model worth emulating.

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Household name



ACTRESS Mandira Bedi is on cloud nine these days. As we all know she has been the face of Indian cricket and when recently she started hosting it for ITV in England the channel broke all records in viewership of sports programming in the country.

Going by the figures, in its first few days it has beaten last years all-time record. ITV's IPL ratings have gone five times over and the projection

is that its ratings will be 10 times over last year's, apart from the regular programming on other channels. IPL clearly has emerged as a top sporting extravaganza on British television.

Mandira could not hide her excitement when she heard about all this and said, "To be accepted and to be a part of something which is so overwhelming is like a dream come true. I hope we continue to entertain and bring all the excitement of the IPL as it happens". Mandira has become a household name in England.

Express Features

BOLLYWOOD

Positive thinking

Bebo was recently awarded the title of Worst Actress by Golden Kela Awards. But she took it sportingly and considers it a compliment



RECENTLY, Kareena Kapoor was awarded title of Worst Actress for Kambakkht Ishq by Golden Kela Awards. The actress sportingly accepted the award and defends her stand saying, "Sandra Bullock won a Razzie for All About Steve and then an Oscar for The Blind Side. So why can't I bag a Kela Worst Actress Award for Kambakkht Ishq and then a Best Actress for 3 Idiots and Kurbaan? I take it as a compliment." She goes on, "One unsuccessful film doesn't make you a bad actress. Sometimes you take a risk for a friend, sometimes to extend your boundaries. Superstars are born from failure more than success." Now that's Bebo, one should not be surprised if she celebrates this one too! Kambakkht Ishq

was also named the worst film of the year. Organisers of the Golden Kela awards, an annual event like the Razzies that spoofs the Oscars, also honoured Sylvester Stallone and Denise Richards for their cameos in Kambakkht Ishq. Chandni Chowk to China was the other big winner on Friday, picking up the supporting cast awards for Ranvir Shorey and Deepika Padukone. The Warner Bros. production also got a special award for its "insensitivity".

Unlike Hollywood's Razzies, where Sandra Bullock showed up this year to collect her award, none of the winners or nominees turned up for the event. "I think perhaps we lack a little bit of sportsman spirit," said Jatin Varma, editor of 'Random' magazine which organises the awards.

Express Features

