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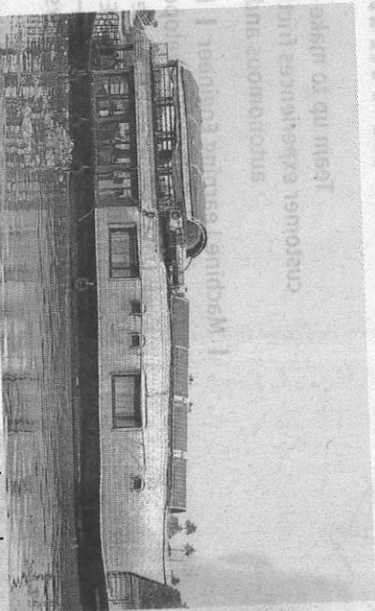
Green energy to propel houseboats now

Diesel/petrol generators of the vessels being replaced with solar panels in first phase

SAM PAUL A.
ALAPPUZHA

Houseboat cruise is one of the mainstays of Kerala Tourism. But the slow-chugging vessels are also blamed for damaging the Vembanad lake ecosystem for waste dumping and carbon emissions. Things are about to change now. Houseboats are gradually beginning to embrace solar power, thus bringing about a cleaner environment.

A project was launched recently to install solar panels on houseboats. Being implemented jointly by the Energy Management Centre (EMC) and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under the aegis of the National Mission on Power Electronics Technology, it



A houseboat fitted with solar power panels in Alappuzha.

aims to replace diesel/petrol generators with solar panels to power various devices, from lighting to air-conditioners, in vessels in the initial phase.

"At present, both propulsion and hotel loads of houseboats are powered by fossil fuel internal

combustion engines. As part of the Central government-funded Low Voltage Direct Current Powered Energy Efficient Houseboats project, we have installed flexible solar panels with a combined capacity of 6 kW in a boat here. A few more operators have shown

interest in installing solar panels," said a C-DAC official.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is sponsoring the installation of solar panels in the first few boats. "We hope this will encourage other operators to follow the suit. The cost of installing solar panels and allied equipment can be recovered in two years. A

proposal submitted to the Union Ministry of Power for providing subsidy is under its consideration," the official said.

Second phase

According to officials, the second phase would see solar energy replacing diesel for propulsion. "The diesel-powered

engines will be replaced with corresponding electric motors. We are working with CUSAT in this regard," the C-DAC official said.

A study conducted as part of the project had revealed that on average a houseboat releases 8.3 kg of carbon dioxide per hour from the propulsion system. Carbon dioxide emissions from hotel load diesel generator is 5 kg per hour.

"There are more than 1,000 such houseboats in Alappuzha, Kunnarakom, Kollam, Kozhikode and other parts of the State," said an official.

Ripeesh P. Pillai, who installed solar panels on his houseboat, said all devices, including air-conditioners, are now operated with solar energy.