

Finally, a memorial for Kongu chieftain

At A Cost Of ₹1 Crore, A Special Column And Statue Of Kalingarayan To Be Build

K A Shaji | TNN

Coimbatore: Seven hundred and thirty years after he built the 56.5 mile long Kalingarayan canal to connect River Bhavani with River Noyyal, hoping to enhance irrigation facilities in the Erode region, a fitting memorial for the Kongu chieftain Kalingarayan in Kalingarayanpalayam, where the irrigation canal originated, is in the pipeline. PWD Minister K V Ramalingam has confirmed that the memorial would come up inside a children's park where there will be a special column and statue of Kalingarayan.

A memorial for the chieftain has been a long pending demand from the Kongu Velalar community. Long forgotten by authorities, there is no memorial of Kalingarayan anywhere in Western Tamil Nadu. When the minister visited Kalingarayanpalayam recently, to release wa-

ter through the canal, the locals urged him to initiate the long pending project.

"The canal supports one of the largest ayacuts in the state. It irrigates vast stretches of turmeric, sugarcane and paddy fields. So, its creator must get a fitting tribute," said Ramalingam.

The canal had deteriorated in recent years and a mas-

IN MEMORIAM

sive renovation is in progress. Efforts to ensure smooth flow of water till the tail end of the canal and prevent the flow of sewage and industrial waste into it are going on. The canal is the worst affected waterway in the district due to indiscriminate dumping of untreated effluents by the textile processing and tannery industries.

"Kalingarayan has contributed significantly to the

region's development. Born Lingaya Gounder around 1240, he rose to become Veera Pandian's (1265-1280) chieftain," says Periyaswami Prahlanan, a farmer on its banks.

The PWD is planning to build the memorial at an estimated cost of Rs1crore. In the beginning, the canal irrigated only about 3,500 acres, as historian and traveller Francis Buchanan noted in his diary, later published as 'A Journey From Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar.'

Buchanan visited the entire region as per the orders of then British Governor General Marquis Wellesley to check the state of agriculture from April 23, 1800 to January 15, 1801. In his book he writes that Kalingarayan's family never seemed to have received any reward in the form of land on account of the grand canal that he built.

Pic: S Parthiban

TRIBUTE TO THE LEGEND

WHO IS KALINGARAYAN?

Kongu chieftain Kalingarayan was born a Lingaya Gounder in 1240. He rose to become Veera Pandian's (1265-1280) chieftain



ABOUT THE CANAL

56.5 mile long, 730 years old

► **Connects the Bhavani with the Noyyal through Erode district**

► **Declared open on January 18, 1282**

► **Main source of water for more than 15,700-acre of land in Erode and neighbouring regions**

► **Renovation is on as it is the worst-affected waterway in Erode due to the indiscriminate dumping of untreated effluents by the textile processing and tannery industries**

► **Kalingarayan ayacut is one of the important agricultural areas in Tamil Nadu**

► **In 1800, the canal irrigated only about 3,500 acres**

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K V Ramalingam | PWD MINISTER