TAMIL NADU

Kalingarayan Canal is 725 years old

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ERODE: This January 19- the fifth day in the Tamil month of Thai in Viya year- will be an epoch-making day in the annals of Kongu and Erode history, in particular, and Tamil Nadu in general.

For it was on this day of Tamil calendar 725 years ago that Kongu chieftain Kalingarayan finished construction of a 56-mile-long canal, which is now known by his name - Kalingarayan Canal. In quirk of fate, the year

He points out that the mean sea level (MSL) at where the Canal begins is 534 ft and ends is 412.48 ft.

The other interesting piece of information that Raju shares from his book on the chieftain and the Canal is that the chieftain wanted to extend the canal further to take it to River Amaravathi.

"Soon after the construction of the Canal, Kalingarayan decided to extend it by building another barrage, which he was unable to complete, though.

To this day the barrage by the name `Ootai anai' (porous barrage) is present at Athipalayam."

Kalingarayan Canal. In quirk of fate, the year in which Kalingarayan finished the construction is the same as the present: Viya.

According to Pulavar S. Raju, an authority on Kongu history, Kalingarayan took 12 years to construct the Canal. "He began in 1271 with the construction of a small barrage across the Bhavani. It was 1283 when he took the Canal to the banks of River Noyyal at Aavudaiaaparai."

He adds, "Though the distance between where Kalingarayan started and ended the Canal is only 32 miles, Kalingarayan designed it in a circuitous way with as many twists and turns as possible that it measured 56 miles." There are two reasons that `Pulavar' Raju attributes to Kalingarayan extending the length. "By extending as much as possible the Canal's length, the chieftain wanted to irrigate larger number of lands, and in doing so made best use of the natural gradient."