

CM lays foundation for river-link project

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Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Sunday laid the foundation stone for the first phase of the Cauvery-South Vellar-Vaigai-Gundar intra-State river-link project. He also laid the foundation for the renovation of irrigation infrastructures under the Extension, Renovation and Modernisation of Cauvery Sub-basin Project, at a function in Kunnathur, near Viralimalai.

Terming the Cauvery-Gundar river linking a momentous project, he said it would be implemented at a cost of ₹14,400 crore. No other project had been implemented by the Public Works Department at such a huge cost, he said. "Several people were skeptical about the project. It is a century-old dream of the people. We have started work. It is the happiest day of my life. I have achieved the goal of my birth," Mr. Palaniswami said, adding that surplus water from the Cauvery would be diverted via the canal to South Vellar, Vaigai and Gundar. The people of Tiruchi, Pudukottai, Sivaganga, Virudhunagar and Ramanathapuram districts would benefit.



Under the first phase of the intra-State river-link project, a canal will be built from the Mayanur barrage on Cauvery river to the South Vellar — a distance of about 118.45 km — at an estimated cost of ₹6,941 crore.

The ₹3,384 crore project for the renovation and modernisation of the Cauvery sub-basin is aimed at ensuring irrigation for over 4.6 lakh acres of land in Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Mayiladuthurai districts, served by the Cauvery, and 21 of its tributaries falling in the lower Cauvery sub-basin.

Attack on Stalin

On the occasion, Mr. Palaniswami accused DMK president M.K. Stalin of indulging in malicious and false propaganda against his government, but said the people would not believe it.

Mr. Stalin has been spreading falsehoods against the AIADMK with an ulterior motive of damaging its reputation, he said. But the people will never believe his false propaganda. They will continue to support "our people and farmer-friendly government," he said.

Rejecting the criticism levelled by Mr. Stalin that the Narendra Modi-led government had not sanctioned any scheme for the State or listened to its demands, Mr. Palaniswami said his government had urged the Prime Minister to announce a special programme, called '*Nadhanthai Vazhi Cauvery*', to rejuvenate and protect the river from urban pollution. Mr. Modi had accepted the demand and included it in the President's address to the Parliament.

This shows that the Centre supports the development of the State and listens to its demands, he said.

Recalling the protests by farmers and the people of Naduvasal in Pudukottai district against the hydrocarbon project, Mr. Palaniswami said it was Mr. Stalin who had approved the project. But the AIAIDMK government had not only halted the project but had also declared the entire delta a protected agricultural zone.

Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam said Mr. Stalin had been criticising the AIADMK government without any substance. The AIADMK government had implemented innumerable schemes in 10 years and had a long list of achievements to seek a fresh mandate. But Mr. Stalin could not project any notable scheme implemented during the DMK regime and he could never become the Chief Minister of the State, he said.

Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar, Principal Secretary of the Public Works Department K. Manivasan and Collector P. Uma Maheswari also spoke.
