Backwater back on tourism map

₹107.88 crore sanctioned for revival of Pazhukkanila

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The Pazhukkanila backwaters, where the Kodoor and Meenachil rivers converge with Vembanad Lake, is all set to get a new life after decades of neglect.

In a major step towards extending backwater tourism in Kottayam beyond the Vembanad banks, the State government has accorded administrative sanction for a project worth ₹107.88 crore for the revival of Pazhukkanila. The project, which envisages deepening of the waterbody and constructing a ring road by strengthening the outer bunds, has been announced by Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac.

According to the Minister, Kerala Irrigation Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (KIIDC) has been entrusted with the task of preparing a detailed project report (DPR). To be implemented using the fund of Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), it will be launched as the first project under the second Kuttanad Package.

25-km ring road

Officials said the silt to be dredged from the lake bed would be used for strengthening the outer bunds of F-Block, Thiruvaykkari, and H-Block paddy polders, which lie near the waterbody. The reinforced outer bund will be developed as a ring road at a length of 25 km, which is expected to trigger tourism activities in the region with greater access to locations including Malarikkal, which hosts the annual water lily festival.

K. Anil Kumar, convenor of the Meenchil-Meenanthara-Kodoor river relinking programme, said the project would cut the flood risk for Kottayam as the run-off water in Meenachil and Kodoor rivers will easily flow out to Vembanad.

“Trash and weeds hold the sway on the lake bed at Pazhukkanila while the centuries-old waterway that runs through it remains un-navigable. The sedimentation has affected its aquatic life, besides raising the risk of flooding in areas surrounding the entire backwater network,” he said.

Old lighthouse

The revival of the lake will also open a water-route for the paddy farmers, ensuring a smooth transportation of the farming materials as well as the paddy stock.

The river mouth at Pazhukkanila, which houses a 200-year-old lighthouse, had served as a strategic point along the water route that connected the Kottayam region with the rest of Kerala for centuries.