

Need to provide status of national importance to Keeladi Excavation Site in Tamil Nadu.-laid

SHRI TAMILSELVAN THANGA (THENI): I wish to bring to the attention of the Government a matter of deep concern of Tamil Nadu and to the cultural conscience of this nation, the "Keeladi" Archaeological Excavation, one of the most significant discoveries, in the history of Indian civilization. The excavations at Keeladi, near Sivaganga district in Tamil Nadu, have unearthed evidence that challenges the prevailing North-centric narrative of Indian history. The findings are ranging from Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, urban settlement planning, industrial craftsmanship and trade networks, which suggest a highly literate, urbanized civilization on the banks of river Vaigai dating back to at least the 6th century BCE. This pushes back the antiquity of Tamil civilization and its literary culture by several centuries. I wish to highlight that the way excavations in other parts of country receive ample funding, national visibility, and swift recognition, in the same way the Keeladi project should also be given importance along with adequate amount of funding. The early phase of excavations by the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department had to proceed despite lukewarm support from ASI. Even the recent proposals to declare Keeladi a site of national importance is delayed. I would like to state that language, culture, and history belongs to all and is not confined to any particular region. The Dravidian movement and people of Tamil Nadu have always stood for the preservation and assertion of Tamil identity, as an equal stakeholder in this diverse Union. Therefore, I, urge the Government of India to confer national importance status to the Keeladi site and ensure it is developed into a world-class archaeological and heritage complex; establish a dedicated cultural research centre at the site with international collaboration; and include Keeladi prominently in NCERT textbooks and public discourse, giving due place to the antiquity of Tamil civilization.