

Times of India

12 August 2018

Aluva, Manappuram, Flood, Devotees

Manappuram sees dip in number of devotees

Jipson Sikhera



INUNDATED: A barricade was erected almost a metre into the waters where devotees were allowed to perform Vavu Bali rituals. A scene from Aluva Siva Temple at Manappuram on Saturday

Disney.Tom@timesgroup.com

Aluva: With the Aluva sand banks completely inundated, there was a considerable decrease in the number of devotees who arrived for Vavu Bali, the annual ritual to honour dead ancestors, on Saturday.

Priests conducting the ceremony who used to make over a lakh rupees as dakshina every year, had to be content with less than Rs10,000 this year as only less than half the number of devotees attended the rituals due to floods.

“We used to rent out a Balithara for sums over Rs20,000 through auctioning every season to conduct the rituals. The dakshina that we receive would go over Rs 1 to Rs1.5 lakh in normal years. It is the least they could do for their loved

ones and devotes tend to be generous with their dakshinas. This year however, we would have only made less than Rs10,000 by the end of the day,” said Cheriyaipilly N S Udayan, a priest at the Manappuram.

While the conventional ‘Balithara’ was unavailable this year due to flooding, temple priests lined up along the road leading to the Aluva Siva Temple to conduct the Bali ceremony.

A few priests were also available at a building of the Devaswom, while the rest conducted the ceremony on the roads.

“There was an obvious decrease in the number of devotees who attend the ceremony. Many had apprehensions about the ritual about the inundation and refrained from atten-

ding. While there would be at least 50,000 devotees participating every year, the number this year was less than half of that. We could officially set up only 8 Balitharas as many priests who had signed up for the ceremony backed out due to the special situation,” said D Jayakumar, Devaswom Administrative officer at Aluva.

Devotees had started coming to the temple, from as early as four in the morning and the ritual went on till 1 pm. Devotees, however, had a tough-time depositing the offering for ancestors in the river as the authorities had erected a barricade in the water leaving just enough space to drop the offerings and return.

Devotees meanwhile expressed relief over being able to complete the ritual.