

**Honourable Members of the Legislative  
Assembly,**

**Vanakkam.**

It is a great honour and privilege to deliver my first address to the sixteenth Legislative Assembly in this August House. This House has a glorious heritage and all of you are proud inheritors of this legacy. I take this opportunity to extend my warm greetings for the New Year and Pongal to all members and to the people of Tamil Nadu. I wish that this year brings happiness, prosperity and well-being to the people of the State.

2) I would like to congratulate the Hon'ble Chief Minister Thiru M.K. Stalin for galvanizing the entire Government machinery and effectively managing the second wave of the Covid pandemic by

ramping up health infrastructure, ensuring availability of oxygen and essential drugs, and transforming the vaccination drive into a people's movement immediately after assuming office. The Government's strategy in successfully containing the second wave without significantly affecting people's livelihood and economy has served as a model for the entire nation.

3) The Government has taken extensive measures to increase the coverage of vaccination against Covid. Mega vaccination drives are being conducted on a weekly basis throughout the State. When this Government assumed office, the coverage of vaccination was very low, with only 8.09 per cent of the eligible population having been administered

the first dose and 2.84 per cent, the second dose. **In just seven months, due to the concerted efforts of this Government, the vaccination coverage has been increased to 86.95 per cent for the first dose and 60.71 per cent for the second dose, with a total of 8.55 crore doses being administered.** I request the people of Tamil Nadu to continue to co-operate with the Government's efforts to ensure success.

4) In line with the new policy announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 25<sup>th</sup> December last year, the State has expanded the vaccination programme to cover children in the age group of 15-18 years, and will provide 'precaution

dose' for frontline staff, health workers and vulnerable sections above 60 years of age.

5) Recently, the Omicron variant of Corona virus has been identified and reported in many states of India including Tamil Nadu. In order to prevent the spread of this variant, the Government has strengthened testing and checking protocols at international airports. Based on the experience gained during the second wave, Tamil Nadu was one of the first states in the country in establishing facilities for genome sequencing. Further, the Government is augmenting RT-PCR testing facilities, installing oxygen generating PSA plants and increasing ICU beds. The Government is fully prepared to tackle the new variant and the challenges it poses.

6) The Government is providing Rs.25 lakh ex-gratia to families of frontline workers who lost their lives due to Covid and Rs.5 lakh to children who have lost their parents. Further, the Tamil Nadu Government has ordered an ex-gratia of Rs.50,000 from the State Disaster Response Fund to the kin of persons who have lost their lives due to Covid. So far, relief has been provided to 27,432 families.

7) Heeding to the appeal of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, donations from various quarters have poured into the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. So far, Rs.543 crore has been received since the Government assumed office and Rs.541.64 crore has been spent towards Covid related activities.

8) The Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, which was introduced by Muthamizh Arignar Kalaigarnar, has been expanded with the annual income ceiling limit being increased from Rs.72,000 to Rs.1,20,000. The Government has also extended the insurance scheme to Covid positive patients to avail all types of treatment, free of cost in private hospitals. As a result, 33,117 persons have availed treatment worth Rs.387 crore, so far.

9) The Government has launched a novel scheme of providing health services at the doorsteps of people - 'Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam'. The scheme was launched with a total outlay of Rs.257 crore to address the increasing

incidence of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. So far, 42,99,294 patients have benefited under this scheme. 'Varumun Kaapom Thittam', which was launched by Muthamizh Arignar Kalaingar, has been revived by this Government and medical camps are being conducted throughout the State under this scheme.

10) With a noble intention of preventing loss of precious lives due to road accidents, the Government has launched 'Innuyir Kaapom- Nammai Kaakum 48 Thittam'. Through this scheme, the Government will bear the cost for critical care during the first 48 hours after the accident. In the first phase, 609 hospitals have been enrolled in this scheme. So far,

4,482 accident victims have been provided critical care.

11) Many parts of the State including Chennai witnessed unprecedented rains and flooding during the North East Monsoon. Under the direct supervision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, there was timely release of surplus water from dams and reservoirs as a precautionary measure. It is praiseworthy that the Hon'ble Chief Minister led from the front, personally visiting the affected districts and ensuring that immediate relief was provided to the affected people. Due to meticulous planning, deft management and effective supervision, the loss of life has been minimized. However, there has been extensive damage to roads, bridges, water bodies and crops. The Government has



submitted detailed memoranda seeking funds to the tune of Rs.6,230 crore to undertake relief and restoration works. We urge that funds from National Disaster Response Fund be released immediately, in order to ameliorate the effects of damage caused by the floods.

12) In order to suggest permanent measures to prevent inundation in Chennai, an advisory committee has been constituted to give recommendations on long term mitigation and management of flood risk. This Government will implement the permanent measures recommended by the committee, to prevent inundation and consequent damages.

13) The Government will distribute a gift hamper for Pongal containing 19 grocery

items and sugarcane to all 2.15 crore rice ration card holders in the State at a total cost of Rs.1,297 crore so that the people, who were severely impacted by the second wave of Covid and unprecedented rains, can celebrate the Pongal festival with joy.

14) The GST compensation regime is coming to an end on 30.06.2022. After the introduction of GST, the State was not able to realize the high growth of tax collections that it had witnessed during the VAT regime. The Covid pandemic has further exacerbated this problem. The State's revenues are yet to recover and it would adversely impact the State finances, if the compensation is not extended for at least two more years. Therefore, this Government strongly urges

the GST Council and the Union Finance Ministry to continue the GST compensation at least till 30.06.2024.

15) It is the vision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister to make Tamil Nadu a 'One Trillion Dollar Economy' by the year 2030. The Government has already initiated various programmes and policies to achieve this vision. A detailed action plan titled 'Towards One Trillion Dollar Economy' will be prepared to ensure that this vision is realized. The Government has been taking earnest efforts to improve the ease of doing business and reduce the compliance burden for businesses and citizens. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has launched a new Single Window Portal and a mobile app to facilitate its use. Further, during the last

Assembly session, 165 obsolete and redundant Acts were repealed.

16) In a survey conducted by a popular english weekly, our Chief Minister has been adjudged as 'The Most Popular Chief Minister in the Home State' in India. It is laudable that the Hon'ble Chief Minister has achieved this recognition within such a short span of time after taking charge.

17) The Government has remained true to the Hon'ble Chief Minister's commitment of providing responsive administration. At the end of the first 100 days of 'Ungal Thoguthiyil Mudhalamaichar' scheme, the Government has successfully redressed 2,29,216 petitions. To continue this good governance practice, the Government has created a separate

department 'Mudhalvarin Mugavari' under the direct supervision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister by integrating Ungal Thoguthiyil Mudhalamaichar Department with CM Cell.

18) The Government is committed to uphold the glory of Tamil language. Muthamizh Arignar Kalaignar had declared that the song 'Neerarum Kadaludutha', penned by Manonmaniam Sundaranar should be sung as 'Tamizh Thai Vazhthu' in Government programmes. This Government has officially declared 'Tamizh Thai Vazhthu' as Tamil Nadu's State Song and has mandated that it should be sung in an appropriate manner at the beginning of all events in educational institutions, universities, government offices and public

institutions. Steps will be taken to encourage this practice even in private institutions.

19) Through the 'Engum Tamizh Edhilum Tamizh' scheme, the usage of Tamil language will be popularized in all government institutions, private schools, shops and commercial establishments. Necessary guidelines will be framed under the Tamil Nadu Official Language Act, 1956 to implement this scheme. In order to encourage students studying in Tamil medium, 100 text books in various subjects in professional courses are being translated into Tamil.

20) The Government has declared January 12 as 'World Tamil Diaspora Day' which will be marked by special events every year. Steps will be taken to bring together all

Tamil welfare associations in different countries and in other states of India on a single platform. This will help the Non-Resident Tamils to be in touch with their roots and also facilitate their investments in the State. The 'Thai Mann' scheme will enable Non-Resident Tamils to participate in the development of infrastructure in their native places.

21) The Government is committed to promote the welfare of Sri Lankan Tamils living in the State. Orders have been issued for constructing 3,510 houses in the first phase at a cost of Rs.176 crore to improve living conditions in rehabilitation camps. Further, the Hon'ble Chief Minister has launched several schemes including increase in cash assistance, skill training and

scholarships, free clothes and utensils, and free gas connections for Sri Lankan Tamils.

22) The Government accords highest priority to effective maintenance of Law and Order in the State. Two new Police Commissionerates have been created in Avadi and Tambaram to improve policing in the Greater Chennai region. For their invaluable contribution in the effective management of Covid, 1.17 lakh police personnel were awarded Rs.5,000 each as incentive. This Government places high priority on the safety of women and children. The Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children, 2021 has been launched for the overall well-being of children, particularly to prevent crimes against them. This Government will



undertake stringent measures to prevent sale of drugs near educational institutions.

23) This Government places high priority on the welfare of farmers and development of agriculture. Due to timely desilting of channels, release of water from Mettur dam as per schedule and implementation of Kuruvai package for Rs.61 crore, a record paddy coverage of 4.9 lakh acres has been achieved in the Kuruvai season this year.

24) To provide succour to the farmers who suffered paddy crop loss due to the recent torrential rains, the Government has announced a compensation of Rs.6,038 per hectare for purchase of necessary inputs to enable replantation by farmers. Due to continuous efforts of this

Government, 25 lakh farmers have been enrolled in the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and an area of 37 lakh acres of crop has been insured.

25) This Government is committed to protect and preserve the State's rich biodiversity and natural resources. The Government has announced Kazhuveli Wetlands in Villupuram district, where migratory birds flock every year, as the 16th bird sanctuary in the State. Recently, an ecopark at the ecologically important Pallikaranai marshland was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has launched a people's movement 'Meendum Manjappai' to create awareness about the ills of single-use

plastics and revive the age-old tradition of Tamils to live in harmony with nature.

26) Though Tamil Nadu is endowed with rich mineral resources, the State Government does not realise adequate revenues from mining. In fact, revenues from mining have stagnated over the last decade. In order to carry out mining in an ecologically sustainable manner and mobilize revenue for Government, a 'Natural Resources Management Plan' will be formulated.

27) After many years, we were able to store water at the current permissible limit of 142 feet level in Mullai Periyar dam for many days continuously. This Government will take all necessary measures to restore the full reservoir level of 152 feet

as per the decreed judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

28) While extending constructive co-operation to neighbouring states, Tamil Nadu will continue to fight for its rightful share of river waters. This Government, which is committed to the welfare of farmers, will never allow construction of Meghedatu Dam by Karnataka across Cauvery river.

29) This Government recognizes the vital role played by livestock sector in supplementing farmers' incomes and providing nutritional security in the rural economy. 7,760 specialized veterinary health care and awareness camps will be conducted to provide free veterinary health care services, particularly in remote villages.

30) It is the paramount duty of this Government to ensure the livelihood and safety of fishermen. We strongly urge that immediate steps should be taken to release the 68 fishermen and 75 fishing boats belonging to Tamil Nadu, currently in Sri Lankan custody. To find an amicable solution to this persisting issue, we exhort the External Affairs Ministry to take measures to resume direct talks between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen. To further safeguard our fishermen from natural calamities, this Government plans to establish transponders in all mechanized boats in the State to provide seamless communication systems. The special allowance for fishermen during the fishing lean period has been enhanced from Rs.5,000 to Rs.6,000 per family and an

amount of Rs.74 crore has been disbursed to 1.22 lakh fishermen families this year.

31) The Government is committed to providing quality education for all children. A mission mode programme 'Illam Thedi Kalvi' has been initiated with an initial outlay of around Rs.200 crore to bridge learning losses among students of classes 1-8 due to lack of access to structured education during the lockdown. The programme is implemented with the support of volunteers and the community. This programme is successfully implemented in 12 districts on a pilot basis and is now being scaled up to the entire State. So far, 80,138 Illam Thedi Kalvi Centres have been started.

**32) A massive grassroots level exercise has been undertaken to bring drop-out children back to school. Using a GPS enabled mobile application and with 80,000 surveyors drawn from various departments, 1,73,792 children have been identified and successfully enrolled in age-appropriate classes.**

33) We are conscious of the fact that the future of a country is shaped in its classrooms. The Government is promoting the dual language policy by bringing together a passion for mother tongue Tamil and proficiency in the global language English, imbibing values of inclusive growth through social justice for all, developing scientific temper and entrepreneurial spirit for the holistic development of the young generation

and create achievers in arts, literature and sports. To realize these lofty ideals, a comprehensive scheme will be implemented over the next five years to modernize the government schools, which are the backbone of our State's education system.

34) The Government will set up smart classrooms in all 24,345 government primary schools, augment infrastructure to accommodate increasing admissions and create high-tech computer, science and language laboratories in all 6,992 middle, high and higher secondary schools. High speed broadband connectivity and well-maintained, clean and hygienic sanitary complexes will be provided in all schools. In addition, refresher training to teachers



with the guidance of eminent academicians in the country and training for development of soft skills of students would be imparted.

35) This Government is committed to improving the quality of all higher education institutions in the State. Preparations have already commenced to offer high quality IT platforms to benefit students and faculty in all universities, arts and science and engineering colleges. The Government is in the process of revamping the syllabus of higher education courses in consultation with experts to improve employability of students. Efforts will be undertaken to improve curriculum and laboratory facilities in polytechnic colleges with the help of industry partners.

36) The Government has decided to reimburse all fees including tuition fee, hostel fee and counselling fee to Government school students admitted in professional courses under 7.5 per cent seats allotted on preferential basis. So far, 8,371 students have been benefited. This scheme will be implemented this year at a cost of Rs.181 crore.

37) The Government envisions a data driven decision support infrastructure for improving governance. The 'Data Purity' project aims to analyze data across various departments and to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach the deserving. Implementation of E-Office system is in progress which will enable speedy disposal and efficient management of files, while

improving transparency and accountability. A computerized system will be rolled out to effectively manage Government assets using appropriate technologies.

38) Tamil Nadu is evolving as a hub for data centres and has attracted an investment of around Rs.30,000 crore. With the objective of attracting more investment and to ease the establishment of data centres, the Government has released a new policy, 'The Data Centre Policy, 2021'.

39) The Government is committed to making Tamil Nadu the most preferred investment destination in South Asia. Three investment conclaves have been conducted in the last seven months resulting in 109 MoUs being signed with a cumulative investment of Rs.56,230 crore and potential

employment generation for 1,74,999 persons. So far, projects to the tune of Rs.21,508 crore have commenced. It is commendable that the State could attract such large investments during the Covid pandemic and is a testimony to the faith reposed by investors on the Government.

40) The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has released two new policies - 'Tamil Nadu Export Promotion Strategy' and 'Tamil Nadu Fin Tech Policy', which will play a crucial role in achieving a one trillion dollar economy by 2030.

41) The medical devices industry has been identified as a sunrise sector and in order to develop a comprehensive ecosystem for this industry, the Government is establishing a Medical Devices Park at

Oragadam spanning 150 acres. The State will be a pioneer by setting up the first large-scale Furniture Park in the country over an extent of 1,100 acres at Thoothukudi. The Government has announced an attractive package of incentives for the industrial units coming up in this Park. I am delighted to inform that the first phase of the Park will be launched by the Hon'ble Chief Minister later this month. These two parks will generate employment for around three lakh persons.

42) The MSME sector is a major contributor to employment and is a vital engine that propels the economic growth of the State. The Government is undertaking several measures to mitigate the Covid-induced crisis and the issue of credit

availability to the sector. The Tamil Nadu State Credit Guarantee Scheme, of this Government, will not only encourage commercial banks to lend more to the MSMEs, but also spur Non-Banking Financial Companies to reduce their cost of lending.

43) The Agro-Industrial Corridor Project will commence next year and will address the industrial infrastructure deficit in Cauvery delta districts by promoting agro-based industries. Tamil Nadu Small Industries Development Corporation Limited has taken up the development of five new industrial estates at a cost of Rs.241 crore. It has also significantly reduced the cost of plots in 31 industrial estates to make them affordable to MSME entrepreneurs.

44) This Government is taking steps to provide latest courses in Government ITIs to train students for emerging industrial sectors in collaboration with national and international agencies.

45) Recognizing the adverse impact of Covid pandemic on weavers, this Government has cleared the rebate claims of Rs.160 crore pending since the last two years for Weavers' Co-operative Societies. Further, several new initiatives have been undertaken including development of an e-commerce website and 'TNKhadi' mobile app.

46) In order to address the problem of low voltage and over-loading, and to ensure provision of reliable power supply, 8,905 distribution transformers are being

erected throughout the State. In order to help the farmers, the Government has announced that it will provide one lakh new agriculture service connections this year. Despite the nationwide coal shortage and unprecedented rains, the Government's tireless efforts have ensured that power supply was maintained without any interruption.

47) The Government is focused on strengthening grassroot democracy by empowering local bodies. After assuming office, this Government has successfully conducted the much-delayed rural local body elections in nine districts. Further, gram sabha meetings in all village panchayats were conducted on 2nd October 2021 after a long gap. This Government is undertaking



necessary steps to conduct urban local body elections at the earliest.

48) To ensure holistic development of villages by providing basic amenities and infrastructure, the Government has revived the Anaithu Grama Anna Marumalarchi Thittam. It is being implemented in 1997 village panchayats at a cost of Rs.1,200 crore this year. In order to inculcate reading habit and critical thinking, 4,116 libraries are being renovated at a cost of Rs.92 crore. Works to improve infrastructure and basic amenities in 145 Periyar Ninaivu Samathuvapurams constructed during 1997-2001 will be taken up in phases, starting this year.

49) Tamil Nadu is one of the most urbanised states in the country. With a view to upgrading infrastructure and enhancing the standard of living in urban areas, the Government has launched the 'Kalaignar Nagarpura Membaatu Thittam' to construct and upgrade civic infrastructure including roads, street lights, bus stands, crematoria, parks and water bodies with an allocation of Rs.1,000 crore. In order to promote people's participation in developmental schemes, the Government has revived the 'Namaku Naame Thittam'.

50) In order to increase employment opportunities to the urban poor, the Government has launched the 'Urban Employment Scheme' with an outlay of Rs.100 crore. This scheme

will not only act as a social safety net but also aid in creation and maintenance of public assets. So far, 31,620 people have been identified and job cards provided for 18,526 people.

51) The Government has laid special emphasis on development of the capital city Chennai, by implementing flagship projects such as Singara Chennai 2.0 at an estimated cost of Rs.500 crore, Chennai City Partnership Programme at an estimated cost of USD 430 million, and Chennai Metropolitan Area Intelligent Transport Systems at an estimated cost of Rs.905 crore, which are aimed at transforming civic infrastructure including roads, transport, stormwater drains, water supply and public recreational spots.

52) It is the vision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister to make Tamil Nadu slum free in the next 10 years. The change in Government's approach from clearance of slums to development of urban habitat and improving livelihoods of urban poor is reflected in the renaming of Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board to Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board. In order to make houses more affordable to the urban poor, this Government has reduced the amount of contribution payable by beneficiaries and enabled payment in easy monthly instalments. Further, a new scheme 'Nam Kudiyruppu Nam Poruppu' is being implemented to ensure proper maintenance of the tenements with the support of Resident Welfare Associations.

53) The Government is focused on strengthening the road network in the State to promote economic and social growth. Under the Chief Minister's Road Development Programme, works for widening of 894 km of roads at a cost of Rs.2,989 crore have been sanctioned this year. In order to reduce traffic congestion in Chennai, three major works namely, the vehicle underpass on Parangi Malai - Medavakkam Road, Multi-level grade separator on Parangi Malai - Poonamallee - Avadi Road and Grade separator at Madhya Kailash junction at a cost of Rs.407 crore, have been sanctioned by the Government.

54) The Hon'ble Chief Minister launched the scheme of free bus travel for women, which has resulted in increase

in women ridership from 40 per cent to 61 per cent in the past four months. The scheme, which has been widely welcomed, will give a thrust to social and economic empowerment of women. To ensure multi-modal integration and facilitate last-mile connectivity for commuters, mini-bus services have been launched from Chennai Metro Rail stations to different parts of the city.

55) The Government will formulate a strategy to revitalize tourism-based economy in the State leveraging the glorious history, cultural heritage and pristine natural beauty with which the State is blessed. A new Tourism Policy including components to promote adventure tourism will be released this year.

56) To secure the future of children who have lost both their parents due to Covid, the Government is depositing a sum of Rs.5 lakh in the name of the child in Tamil Nadu Power Finance Corporation. The deposited amount will be paid with accrued interest when the child completes 18 years of age. So far, 287 children have benefited under this scheme. A sum of Rs.3 lakh is given in the name of the child who has lost either of the parents due to Covid as immediate relief. So far, 7,513 children have benefited.

57) The Government has created a special fund - 'Tamil Nadu Children Victim Compensation Fund' for the rehabilitation of victim children who have been awarded compensation under Protection of Children

from Sexual Offences Act, 2012. So far, 103 children have benefited under this scheme and Rs.2 crore has been disbursed. The Government is taking stern action against perpetrators of sexual offences against children.

58) In order to empower women, the Self Help Group (SHG) movement was started in Dharmapuri by Muthamizh Arignar Kalaingar for the first time in the country in 1989. The seeds then sown have grown manifold into a massive movement today. During this financial year, 29,425 new SHGs have been formed with 4,02,829 women. The Government will ensure that SHG-Credit Linkage will be more than Rs.20,000 crore this year. So far, an amount of Rs.14,872 crore has been



provided to 1,83,096 SHGs as loans by various banks.

59) In a landmark move fulfilling the dream of Thanthai Periyar and Muthamizh Arignar Kalaignar that people of all castes can become archakars, this Government has issued appointment orders to 58 trained archakars belonging to different caste denominations. **Since the Government assumed office, 432.82 acres of temple lands at an estimated value of Rs.1,628.61 crore have been retrieved after clearing encroachments.** This Government is providing Rs.1,000 as monthly incentive to priests working in 12,959 temples under 'Oru Kaala Poojai' scheme. This Government also ordered that no charges will be collected

from differently abled for conducting their marriages in temples and temple-owned marriage halls.

60) A publication division of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department (HR and CE) will be established with state-of-art facilities to bring out books on the history and architecture of temples, and the rich Tamil literature including Bhakti literature. A drive will be launched to preserve the rare palm leaf manuscripts available in temples and mutts. Major temples will be encouraged to have bookstalls wherein books about the history of temples, heritage, culture and Tamil language will be displayed. Retired officials of Archaeological Survey of India and State Archaeology department have been

appointed as archaeological advisors for conservation, preservation and renovation of ancient temples under the control of HR and CE Department. I sincerely appreciate the Government for taking proactive steps to safeguard temple lands and effectively manage temple assets.

61) In the recent excavations carried out by State Archaeological Department, it has been scientifically established that 'Thanporunai' civilization, which thrived on the banks of Thamiraparani river, dates back 3200 years. Works will commence shortly to establish a museum with modern facilities to showcase the rare artefacts found in excavations carried out in Adhichanallur, Sivakalai and Korkai. To protect our

archeological heritage, the Government has banned mining activities in the vicinity of archaeological sites and in archeologically important places.

62) The core ideology of the Dravidian movement is to ensure self respect, dignity and social justice for every individual, especially those belonging to the marginalized communities. The Hon'ble Chief Minister's gesture to personally visit the Narikuravar and Irular families in their homes and redress their grievances, speaks volumes about his personal commitment to this cause.

63) Acting upon a long standing demand, the Government has created the Tamil Nadu State Commission for

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, a statutory body with autonomous powers for the protection of rights of these communities.

64) This Government has taken several steps including increase in allowances, sanctioning of new hostels and initiation of training programmes for the welfare of students belonging to Adi Dravidar, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities.

65) The unrelenting efforts of the Hon'ble Chief Minister have made 27 per cent reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in All-India quota for undergraduate and post-graduate medical courses a reality. We will take all necessary

steps to ensure that similar reservation is provided in all professional courses at the All-India level. From the days of Justice Party, the State has been at the forefront in upholding the values of social justice and has been guiding other states on the path of humanity and progress. This Government will continue to perform this historical responsibility.

66) Entrance exams create an unequal platform by being inherently discriminatory against rural students. Hence, this Government is of the firm view that entrance exams like NEET are unnecessary for student admissions to professional courses and will continue to reiterate this position.

67) This Government is committed to the welfare and development of minorities. The scheme of providing subsidy to pilgrims undertaking Haj and Jerusalem pilgrimage will be continued. The Citizenship Amendment Act has caused concerns amongst minorities and this House has passed a resolution to repeal it. This Government will strive to ensure that this resolution comes to fruition.

68) The Government is undertaking several measures to improve the livelihood of differently abled persons. With a view to identifying suitable job opportunities for them, all government and private establishments have been directed to publish an equal opportunity policy. Further, a new Differently Abled Employment and Livelihood

Centre has been established to facilitate suitable employment opportunities for their economic empowerment.

69) This Government is committed to promote sporting talent among the youth of this State. To inspire and encourage sports persons from Tamil Nadu to perform at the international level, the Hon'ble Chief Minister has announced a cash prize of Rs.2 crore and a job to Thiru. Mariappan Thangavelu, silver medallist in the Tokyo Paralympics. To preserve and promote the traditional sport of Silambattam, the discipline has been included for reservation in Government jobs provided for sports persons.

70) This Government has faced umpteen challenges after assuming office, be it the Covid second wave or the



unprecedented torrential rains. But, it has successfully converted each one of them into landmark achievements. This Government is working tirelessly and we assure that we will continue to work with the same vigour, passion and commitment for the welfare of people.

71) This Government is committed to the principles of self-respect, social justice, equality, rational thinking and empathy. This Government's path is guided by the thoughts and ideals of noble leaders like Thanthai Periyar, Annal Ambedkar, Perunthalaivar Kamarajar, Perarignanar Anna and Muthamizh Arignar Kalaigarnar.

72) This Government will leave no stone unturned to realize the dreams and aspirations of the people and strive towards

making Tamil Nadu the best administered State and a role-model not only to other states in the country, but to the entire South Asian region.

73) I would like to again wish everyone a very Happy Pongal and conclude my address with the immortal words of Mahakavi Bharathiyar.

**Vazhiya Senthamizh!**

**Vazhga Natramizhar!**

**Vazhiya Bharatha Mani Thiru Nadu!**