

**Hon'ble Members of the Legislative
Assembly,**

Vanakkam.

I am very happy to address the first session of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly for the calendar year 2020. I extend my warm greetings to each one of you for the New Year and for the Pongal festival. I also wish that 2020 will bring greater peace, prosperity and progress to the people of Tamil Nadu.

2) This Government led by the Hon'ble Chief Minister is firmly treading on the path laid out by the late Chief Minister J Jayalithaa. The Government continues to be single mindedly focused on the

socio-economic development of Tamil Nadu and its people, with specific emphasis on protecting the poor and vulnerable. It is a matter of great pride to all of us that Tamil Nadu has secured the first position among 18 big States in the Composite Ranking in the Good Governance Index released by the Government of India for the first time on Good Governance Day on 25th December 2019. Further, Tamil Nadu was also adjudged 'Overall Best Performing State' for the second consecutive year in the 'State of the States' survey carried out by India Today magazine in November 2019. I congratulate the Hon'ble Chief Minister on these very significant and highly creditable achievements. This Government has achieved the late Chief Minister

J Jayalalithaa's goal of making Tamil Nadu the numero uno State in India.

3) This is a Government that delivers on its promises made to the people of Tamil Nadu. In the Governor's Addresses since May 2011, 105 announcements have been made, of which 73 have been fully implemented and the balance are under implementation. Since February 2017, Hon'ble Chief Minister has made 453 announcements under Rule 110 of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Rules. Of this, 114 announcements have been fully implemented, while for 303 announcements, necessary sanction orders have been issued and the schemes are under implementation and will be speedily completed. This apply

illustrates that this Government is committed to effective delivery.

4) Grassroots democracy is an inalienable part of Tamil Nadu's heritage from times immemorial. Elections to Rural Local Bodies in 27 Districts have been successfully completed despite many obstacles. The elections in the remaining nine Districts and for the Urban Local Bodies will be held shortly. This demonstrates the Government's commitment to democratic decentralization.

5) Law and order continues to be very effectively maintained and Tamil Nadu is in the first position in the Judicial and Public Security component of the Good Governance Index. Tamil Nadu is ranked the

'Best Performing State' in maintenance of Law and Order in the 'State of the States' survey. Many major events like the Athivaradhar festival at Kancheepuram, Karthigai Deepam festival in Thiruvannamalai and observance of Thevar Jayanthi were very effectively managed with elaborate bandobust arrangements. Prompt response and timely remedial and preventive action have kept the State peaceful and free of any untoward incidents.

6) The second India-China Informal Summit Meeting between Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi and His Excellency President of the Peoples' Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping was held in Mahabalipuram on October 11th and 12th, 2019. The extensive security and other

arrangements made for the event ensured that it was conducted smoothly with least disruption to the local people and received widespread appreciation. The Hon'ble Prime Minister promised a tourism development package for Mahabalipuram and a proposal for Rs.563.50 crore has been prepared and sent to Government of India for approval. I urge the Government of India to accord speedy approval. During the Summit, it was also decided that Fujian province and Quanzhou city in China will establish sister state/province and city relations with Tamil Nadu and Chennai. As a follow-up, a high-level Chinese delegation also visited Chennai recently.

7) This Government places the highest emphasis on fiscal prudence. Despite

several challenges, the fiscal targets are being adhered to. There has been a diminution in the overall flow of Central funds to Tamil Nadu. Contrary to the impression that the Fourteenth Finance Commission's recommendations increased the gross flow of resources from the Centre to the States, in reality there has been a reduction in the gross transfers from the Centre to States. Moreover, Tamil Nadu has faced a more severe adverse impact due to the horizontal distribution formula of the Fourteenth Finance Commission.

8) Tamil Nadu is eagerly awaiting the recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission. This Government has made a detailed presentation before the Finance Commission and is very hopeful of

fair and equitable distribution of resources, which rewards efficiency and performance.

9) This year, Tamil Nadu has so far received Rs.7,096 crore as GST compensation. Central Government grants of Rs.17,957.31 crore have also been received so far this year. However, there are a few outstanding issues in the release of dues to Tamil Nadu which are being followed up closely. In the first year of implementation of GST in 2017-18, instead of distributing 50 per cent of the unallocated IGST in proportion to SGST collection in various States, the Government of India incorrectly appropriated the entire unallocated portion of IGST to the tune of Rs.88,344.22 crore to the Consolidated Fund of India and distributed 42 per cent of this to the States

as per the Fourteenth Finance Commission's devolution formula. This resulted in a net loss of Rs.4,073 crore to Tamil Nadu and we are insisting on the immediate release of this amount due to our State. Due to our efforts, this issue has been referred to a Group of Ministers by the GST Council and we seek an early favourable decision. This Government, firmly committed to protect the legitimate interests of the States, has repeatedly raised such issues with the Government of India in multiple fora and at the highest level. I once again urge the Government of India to settle the dues of Tamil Nadu at the earliest.

10) This Government continues to strongly protect the interests of Tamil Nadu in sharing of inter-State river waters. We once again urge the Government of India

to ensure that the Detailed Project Report for the Mokedatu project submitted by Government of Karnataka is rejected and returned forthwith and to restrain the Government of Karnataka from taking up any construction activity in the Cauvery basin of Karnataka without the prior consent of the Government of Tamil Nadu, in accordance with the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The Government of Karnataka is also planning a reservoir across the Markandeya river in the Pennaiyar Basin. In May 2012, the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa had written to the then Prime Minister, strongly opposing any construction of storage or diversion structures on the Pennaiyar river in Karnataka. The matter was also taken up a

number of times subsequently and finally, the Government of Tamil Nadu has filed a suit in the Supreme Court in May 2018. Based on the interim order of the Supreme Court, Tamil Nadu has requested the Government of India to constitute a Tribunal under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 on the Pennaiyar dispute. The main case is still pending in the Supreme Court. This Government urges the Government of India to constitute the Tribunal at the earliest and to direct the Government of Karnataka not to take up any water storage or diversion works in the Pennaiyar Basin without Tamil Nadu's consent.

11) I compliment the Hon'ble Chief Minister for his amicable approach on

the Parambikulam Aliyar Project and related issues and his initiative to visit Thiruvananthapuram to hold fruitful talks with his Kerala counter-part. These have been followed up by further talks at the official level. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has permitted Tamil Nadu to carry out strengthening works in the Mullai Periyar dam to restore the water level to 152 ft. Accordingly, the Government of Tamil Nadu has sanctioned Rs.7.85 crore for carrying out strengthening works for which environmental clearances are required. This Government urges the Government of Kerala and the Government of India to accord requisite clearances for strengthening the Mullai Periyar dam at the earliest.

12) The Hon'ble Chief Minister appealed to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh to release water from Kandaleru reservoir for meeting Chennai's drinking water needs and in response, water was released for Chennai by Andhra Pradesh at a very crucial time. We thank the Government of Andhra Pradesh for their timely gesture.

13) The Government of Tamil Nadu will urge the Government of India to provide dual citizenship to Srilankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu. Government of Tamil Nadu will ensure that the interests of all citizens regardless of religion or creed are protected.

14) With the proactive steps taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu, the

number of fishermen and fishing boats apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the Palk Bay has come down during 2018 and 2019. As of now, only 17 fishermen continue to be in Sri Lankan custody and efforts are being taken to release them at the earliest. The State Government reiterates its demand that the Government of India should intervene and have this issue amicably resolved at the earliest.

15) Ensuring clean administration as well as transparency and accountability in governance is the foremost goal of this Government. Tamil Nadu Lokayukta Act, 2018 was enacted and with the appointment of the Chairman and four Members, the Tamil Nadu Lokayukta has been made functional. Speedy redressal of public

grievances has been enabled through the AMMA Thittam and the Taluk Online Petition Monitoring System. As a flagship scheme for on the spot grievance redressal, the Hon'ble Chief Minister's Special Grievances Redressal Scheme was launched in August 2019, under which so far 9.77 lakh petitions have been received and 5.18 lakh petitions have been favourably disposed of, in a record time of 40 days. The formation of five new districts viz., Tenkasi, Kallakurichi, Ranipet, Tiruppathur and Chengalpattu will take administration much closer to the people.

16) Being prepared for natural disasters and responding to them effectively saves lives and property. The State Disaster Management Perspective Plan for the period upto 2030, the formation of the Tamil Nadu

Disaster Response Force with one full Special Police Battalion and the use of technology including aerial photogrammetry using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Geographical Information System (GIS) and high end communication and rescue equipment are all measures to enhance preparedness. Mass awareness programmes have been conducted on the preventive steps to be taken to minimize the loss of life and damage to properties during disasters.

17) This Government takes great pride in promoting Tamil language and culture. I commend the Hon'ble Chief Minister for announcing November 1st every year as 'Tamil Nadu Day' to commemorate the formation of the State in its present form in 1956. The Government of

Tamil Nadu supported the Tenth International Tamil Research Conference held at Chicago in July 2019 and provided Rs.1 crore as financial assistance for the establishment of a Tamil Chair in the University of Houston in the United States. The memory of Tamil leaders, Tamil scholars and freedom fighters continues to be perpetuated and their contributions honoured through the institution of awards, establishment of memorials and official observance of birth anniversaries. The Ninaivu Mandapam for Hon'ble Puratchi Thalaivi Amma Selvi J Jayalalithaa, at a cost of Rs.50.80 crore, will be completed shortly.

18) This year we commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

On 22nd September 1921 in Madurai, Mahatma Gandhi took the historic decision to wear only a loin cloth and shawl as a powerful message to the world about the abject poverty in India caused by British Rule. To commemorate this event, I urge the Government of India to upgrade the Gandhigram Rural Institute near Madurai as a Centre of Eminence for Rural Development and Gandhian Philosophy. Tiruchengode Gandhi Ashram was founded by Bharat Ratna Rajaji on 6th February 1925. Mahatma Gandhi visited this Ashram twice. The Government has decided to provide a one-time grant of Rs.2 crore to support the activities of the Gandhi Ashram, Tiruchengode. The Government will support revival of the activities of the Ashram

to further spread the message of Mahatma Gandhi. Tamil Nadu has been awarded the 'Overall Best State' for the Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2019 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during the Swachh Bharat Diwas on 2nd October 2019.

19) Utilising the scarce water resources of Tamil Nadu for the maximum benefit of the people is a sacred duty and the Hon'ble Chief Minister has launched the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Conservation and Augmentation Mission as a people's movement. An important element of the Water Mission is the Kudimaramath scheme for restoring irrigation supply channels, canals and tanks, which has gained further momentum with people's participation. Since 2016-17, a total number

of 4,871 works at a cost of Rs.931.76 crore have been taken up under this scheme. The deepening and desilting of water bodies has meant that much more of this year's good rains could be harvested and stored for irrigation, drinking water and ground water recharge. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has announced the 'Nadanthai Vazhi Cauvery' scheme in order to restore the River Cauvery to its pristine glory. As Tamil Nadu is a water deficit State, inter basin transfer of river water is essential to meet its water needs. To fulfill this need, this Government urges the Government of India to divert at least 200 TMC of water from the Godavari to the Cauvery basin, as the initial stage of the inter-State river water linkage. This Government on its part, will pursue inter

linking of rivers within the State and will implement the Cauvery-Gundar river linkage project, under which as the first phase, the Cauvery-South Vellar link will be taken up during the ensuing financial year, as already announced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

20) This Government continues to vigorously pursue the objective of creating sustainable livelihood options for farmers through extension of front end technology, market integration, value added production, promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) and food processing industries. Given the favourable monsoon this year and irrigation water reaching tail-end areas through better management, the area sown has increased by 7 lakh acres and a bountiful

food grain production of 115 lakh metric tonnes is expected. Tamil Nadu continues to be the leading State in the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and the Micro Irrigation scheme. Under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the farmers in Tamil Nadu have received insurance compensation claims in excess of Rs.7,200 crore in the past 3 years. The Tamil Nadu Agriculture Produce and Livestock Contract Farming Act, 2019 has been passed which will enable farmers to sell farm produce at pre agreed prices. The Sugar Industry is facing a crisis, which is adversely affecting the livelihood of sugarcane farmers. As part of the way forward, financial restructuring of the sugar mills is required and I request the Union

Government to announce a special financial package to assist the revival of the sugar sector in Tamil Nadu.

21) In a significant structural transformation, the share of the livestock sector in the Gross State Value Added at constant prices has exceeded the share of the agricultural sector in each of the 3 years from 2016-17 to 2018-19. This rapid growth of the livestock sector has been fuelled by the success of flagship schemes of this Government, including the free distribution of milch cows, goats, sheep and native breeds of poultry. The Government has established two new Veterinary Colleges since 2011 and recently sanctioned one more Veterinary College at Thalaivasal in Salem District to take the total number of

Veterinary Colleges in Tamil Nadu to five. To provide a further thrust to the livestock sector, the Hon'ble Chief Minister will shortly be laying the foundation stone for the Advanced Integrated Institute for Research in Livestocks and Animal Sciences and the Veterinary College at Thalaivasal in Salem District at a total cost of Rs.1,000 crore. I thank the Government of India for having protected the interest of the dairy industry in India by acceding to the request of this Government and not entering into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in dairy products as a part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with ASEAN and the Pacific region countries.

22) I thank the Government of India for its support in implementing the scheme

of diversification of trawl fishing boats in the Palk Bay into deep sea fishing boats including tuna longliners. Fishing harbours at Mookaiyur and Kunthukal at a cost of Rs.120 crore and Rs.100 crore respectively are nearing completion. A fishing harbour at Vellapallam in Nagapattinam district is to be established at a cost of Rs.100 crore. We have obtained support from Government of India and NABARD for establishing fishing harbours at Thiruvotriyurkuppam, Tharangambadi and Mudhunagar at a cost of Rs.420 crore. All these projects will further promote deep sea fishing in the State.

23) The Universal Public Distribution System of Tamil Nadu continues to be the model for other States to emulate. Tamil Nadu with its fully computerized,

Aadhaar enabled PDS operations, is able to operationalize the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme. This year, although we had a normal monsoon season, the farmers are still awaiting harvest. A country will flourish only if farmers are happy. I appreciate the Hon'ble Chief Minister for his announcement of distributing Pongal gift hampers and a cash gift of Rs.1,000 per family, once again, to enable the people of Tamil Nadu to celebrate Pongal festival with gaiety and fervour.

24) As envisioned by the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa in the Vision Tamil Nadu 2023, Tamil Nadu is emerging as the most preferred destination for investment in manufacturing, trade and services due to intrinsic strengths in human

resources and infrastructure. There is increased enthusiasm amongst investors to invest in Tamil Nadu due to the strong fundamentals including the diversified economy, ease of doing business, investor-friendly Government and our accessible Chief Minister. I appreciate the Hon'ble Chief Minister for taking direct responsibility for attracting investment to Tamil Nadu by visiting UK, USA and Dubai in September, 2019 and by chairing the High Power Committee to expedite single window approvals. The Global Investors Meet held in January, 2019 was a major success attracting Rs.3,00,501 crore worth of investments providing employment to 10.5 lakh persons. Till date, 53 projects have already commenced commercial production

and 219 projects are at various stages of implementation. After the Global Investors Meet, 63 new MoUs have been signed, committing an investment of Rs.19,136 crore with employment potential for 83,837 new jobs.

25) The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector continues to be the backbone of industrial employment in Tamil Nadu with 21.53 lakh registered units which provide employment to 1.38 crore persons. To provide a further fillip to the textile industry which is one of the largest employers in the State, the Tamil Nadu New Integrated Textile Policy, 2019 was launched in March, 2019 focusing on attracting new investment, technology upgradation and skilling. The Government of Tamil Nadu has

taken many steps to improve the ease of doing business for MSMEs and to encourage start-ups. The Tamil Nadu Start Up and Innovation Policy launched in January 2019 has greatly improved the start-up environment.

26) The Government is harnessing Information and Communication Technology to ensure improved public service delivery and greater transparency in governance. To enhance broadband connectivity across the State, the Government of Tamil Nadu has secured the approval of the Government of India for the BharatNet project at an estimated cost of Rs.1,815.31 crore. This project will connect all the 12,524 village panchayats in the State. Shortly, the TamilNet Project will also

be implemented to connect all the Corporations, Municipalities and Town Panchayats. The Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency is harnessing Emerging Technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT) and Data Analytics for enhancing Government service delivery.

27) The tourism industry is an engine of development with large employment potential. Tamil Nadu continues to receive the largest number of both domestic and foreign tourists in the country. As already announced, the Tamil Nadu Tourism Promotion Project will be launched at a cost of Rs.2,000 crore to showcase the large and diverse tourism potential of the State in a sustainable manner and to ensure greater local employment and prosperity. Under this

project, 295 destinations will be developed in six circuits with provision of world class infrastructure adopting a comprehensive area development approach through a Public-Private Partnership model.

28) In Vision Tamil Nadu 2023, the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa had stated that Tamil Nadu would provide high quality infrastructure all over the State, comparable with the best in the world to its residents. The efforts made by this Government to realize the vision, have secured for Tamil Nadu the first rank in the Public Infrastructure and Utilities sector of the Good Governance Index. The indicators include those related to water supply, sanitation, rural connectivity, access to clean cooking fuel, access and availability of power

supply and growth in per capita power consumption.

29) The late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa ensured that Tamil Nadu turned into a power surplus State from being a power deficit State. The installed generation capacity in Tamil Nadu was nearly doubled in the last eight years to 31,426 MW. This Government lays the highest emphasis on ensuring that the power surplus status of Tamil Nadu is sustained and a further 17,850 MW of generation capacity is under execution. Tamil Nadu is a world leader in renewable energy with an installed capacity of 13,319 MW. The Hon'ble Chief Minister launched the Solar Energy Policy, 2019 which targets creation of

9,000 MW of both distributed and utility scale solar power generation.

30) Tamil Nadu has always prided itself on the connectivity provided by its high quality road network. This Government ensures that the road network is consistently upgraded and made safer under the Comprehensive Road Infrastructure Development Programme. The upgradation of the road network in the influence zone of the Chennai Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor Project has been taken up with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank at a cost of Rs.6,448 crore. The first phase of the Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (CPRR) project from Ennore Port to Thatchur has been taken up with JICA assistance at a cost of

Rs.2,673.42 crore and land acquisition for the remaining portions of the CPRR has also commenced. The multi-pronged efforts of the Government have resulted in a substantial reduction of road accidents from 71,431 in 2016 to 63,923 in 2018 and fatal road accidents from 16,092 in 2016 to 11,378 in 2018. The number of fatalities per 10,000 vehicles has fallen from 12 in 2010 to three in 2019.

31) The reach and quality of bus transportation in Tamil Nadu has always been the pride of the State. The State Transport Undertakings (STUs) carry 1.63 crore passengers a day, and the Government is committed to further increasing the ridership share of public transportation in the State. While public

transport fares are the lowest in the country, there is no compromise in performance and the 8 STUs in Tamil Nadu have won 11 Association of State Road Transport Undertakings awards in 2016-17 and 9 awards in 2017-18 for physical performance parameters. The State Transport Corporations will introduce electric vehicles at scale through the Government of India supported FAME-II programme and with KfW assistance.

32) Chennai Metro Rail is fast becoming the pride of Chennai City. Phase-I of the Chennai Metro Rail for a length of 45 km, is fully operational and the Phase-I extension upto Thiruvottiyur / Wimco Nagar will be completed by mid 2020. The Government has already approved the

implementation of three more Chennai Metro Rail corridors in Phase-II with a total length of 118.9 km, at an estimated cost of Rs.69,180 crore. While JICA has agreed to fund a stretch of 52.01 km, and the first tranche of the loan agreement has been signed, multilateral assistance from the Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank is being availed of for the remaining stretches under Phase-II. I urge the Government of India to accord early approval for their participation in the Phase-II project on the 50:50 equity sharing model adopted for Phase-I. Based on a feasibility study, the Government has decided to extend the Metro Rail Corridor by 15.3 km from the Chennai Airport to

Kilambakkam, where a new mofussil bus stand is coming up. To address increasing traffic congestion on the Tambaram-Velachery Corridor, the Government will establish a rail based transit system for a total of 15.5 km and Chennai Metro Rail Limited will prepare the Detailed Feasibility and Project Report.

33) Integration of multiple modes of transportation is the way forward. The Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA) Act and Rules have already been notified and have come into effect. The Government of Tamil Nadu proposes to enter into a 'Chennai City Partnership' as a unique model of development co-operation with the World Bank, in which one of the pillars is urban

mobility and transportation. The goal is to integrate the multiple transportation modes in Chennai and enable the seamless mobility of people in the city through an empowered CUMTA.

34) Tamil Nadu is the most urbanized large state in the country and requires a special emphasis on provision of quality urban infrastructure and services. In addition to various Central schemes like the Smart City Programme, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) programme, the grants received under the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission and the devolution recommended by the State Finance Commission, the State Government augments the resources of urban local bodies

through the Integrated Urban Development Mission and the Chennai Mega City Development Mission. Multilateral funding through the World Bank assisted Tamil Nadu Sustainable Urban Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank assisted Tamil Nadu Urban Flagship Investment Programme ensures additional resources to meet urban infrastructure requirements.

35) Housing is one of the basic needs which this Government is committed to meet. In rural areas, under the Chief Minister's Solar Powered Green Housing Scheme, so far 3,80,000 houses have been sanctioned from the year 2011-12 onwards. Under the Indira Awas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin), a total of 9,69,189 houses have been taken

up for construction from 2011-12 onwards. The shortage of quality housing in urban areas has been systematically addressed by this Government. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), construction of 6.94 lakh dwelling units at a total project cost of Rs.31,252.95 crore has been taken up. The Common Building and Development Rules notified by the Government have provided a substantial fillip to the affordable housing sector.

36) Tamil Nadu continues to be a leading State in achieving the targets for health indicators including Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Ratio and Life Expectancy at Birth. This has been enabled by implementing several landmark schemes. The National Schemes announced by

Government of India similar to schemes already implemented in Tamil Nadu, have been effectively integrated for efficient implementation - the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme has been integrated with the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme with the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana. Under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, so far 40.16 lakh persons have been provided treatment at a total cost of Rs.6,487.82 crore and 8,513 persons have been assisted for high-end surgeries from the corpus fund. To prevent outbreaks of mosquito borne diseases like dengue, malaria and chikungunya, the Government will distribute

free mosquito nets to all poor families in the endemic areas, as already announced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

37) Upgrading human resources in the health sector is a key goal of the Government. The vision of the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa was to establish a Government Medical College in each district of the State. This year we have made a substantial and unprecedented leap in that direction, with the establishment of nine new medical colleges at Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar, Nilgiris, Dindigul, Namakkal, Tiruppur, Thiruvallur, Krishnagiri and Nagapattinam districts at a total cost of Rs.3,267.25 crore. This was enabled by the swift action of the State Government in

identifying suitable sites and effective follow up with the Government of India.

38) Tamil Nadu aims to become a vibrant knowledge society with world class human resources. The Government's efforts in this direction have resulted in the highest Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education amongst all States in India at 49.3 per cent. The Government has opened new colleges, commenced new courses, invested in provision of improved infrastructure, created more posts of teachers and filled teacher vacancies to make higher education more accessible and to enhance quality. Anna University has been selected by Government of India as an Institution of Eminence. Government of India have clarified that since Anna University is a State Public University

set up under a State Act, it would continue to function under the State Act and the State reservation policy will continue to be applicable to it, even after getting the status of Institution of Eminence. The Government has constituted a Committee comprising five Hon'ble Ministers to study the issues and an appropriate decision will be taken based on the recommendations of the Committee.

39) Government of Tamil Nadu's consistent effort is to ensure the continuance of cent percent enrolment and retention of students in schools, by providing quality infrastructure, nutritious noon meals, full complement of teaching staff, text books, school supplies needed by students and quality teaching aids. The Government continues to revise and update the

curriculum, incorporating modern concepts of education to continuously maintain standards. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is also harnessed through the use of energized technologies with Quick Response (QR) codes, links to audio visual content, the Tamil Nadu Teachers Portal and through the educational channel 'Kalvi' telecast 24x7 by the Tamil Nadu Arasu Cable TV Corporation. The scheme to implement Model Composite Schools with classes from LKG to Twelfth standard has now been extended to 120 Government schools across the State and is functioning successfully.

40) Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation has completed a skill gap study and formulated District Skill Development

Plans for all Districts to enable the supply of trained human resources for various industries. This approach will greatly enhance an industry oriented employment focus of skill development. Memoranda of Understanding for the establishment of Apex Skill Development Centres (ASDC) in three sectors – auto, auto-component machine tools; health & health care and logistics & transportation have been signed. Two more MoUs are to be signed to establish ASDCs in the Construction and Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sectors. Government will launch a special initiative under the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Mission to identify one lakh college dropouts and provide them special training which will enable them to either complete their higher

education courses or find appropriate employment.

41) Tamil Nadu is internationally acclaimed for being a pioneer in imposing the ban on 'one-time use and throw' plastics from January 2019. People of the State have spontaneously come forward to adhere to the ban and have greatly reduced the use of plastics. The Government is fully committed to the ban and its implementation through enforcement and promotion of alternative products. The Government has proposed several projects to the Government of India for consideration under the Green Climate Fund and National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change at a cost of Rs.4,682 crore. I request the Government of India to speedily approve these proposals.

42) Broad basing sports and development of a sporting culture is the goal of this Government. Under the AMMA Youth Sports Scheme, youth clubs are being formed in all villages and town panchayats and play fields with necessary sports equipment are being provided. The conduct of tournaments at block, district and State levels will enable identification of talent, apart from channelizing the energies of the youth in a positive direction. Government of Tamil Nadu's scheme of awarding high cash incentives to recognize medal winning performances in international and national events and providing three per cent reservation for sportspersons in employment has greatly encouraged sports persons of the State.

43) Tamil Nadu is a forerunner in the empowerment of women through education, employment and economic development. The Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission is being implemented in all blocks of the State except Chennai district. Self Help Groups, Village Poverty Reduction Committees and Panchayat Level Federations are community based organisations creating a socio-economic revolution in rural Tamil Nadu. In 2019-20, a total credit linkage of Rs.12,500 crore is targeted for the Self Help Groups in the State.

44) The effective implementation of welfare schemes intended for women including Marriage Assistance Schemes, the Cradle Baby Scheme, the Girl Child Protection Scheme and the 'Beti Bachao

Beti Padhao' scheme, have all resulted in the improvement of sex ratio at birth from 917 to 943 in the last three years. Tamil Nadu ensures that immediate emergency response is provided 24 x 7 for women in distress facing violence and threat of violence in both public and private places. The 'Kavalan' App has been highly successful in giving women a greater sense of security. Effective implementation of programmes intended for welfare of children, secured for Tamil Nadu, the first position in the 'Overall Excellence in Implementation' and 'Capacity Building' categories of the Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission) Awards for 2018-2019.

45) Ensuring social security for senior citizens is an important duty of a

welfare State. The proportion of senior citizens in Tamil Nadu is increasing. Tamil Nadu is implementing five Social Security schemes which provide a pension of Rs.1,000 per month. As on date, the sanctioned strength of Social Security Pensions is 29.80 lakh. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has announced that an additional 5 lakh eligible persons would be provided Social Security Pensions from the current year onwards. The Government has also relaxed the criteria to determine destitution under Social Security / Old Age Pension Schemes, by increasing the value of fixed assets owned by the individual from Rs.50,000 to Rs.1 lakh. A free house assigned under any scheme of Government

will not be included in the definition of fixed assets.

46) Tamil Nadu aims to be an inclusive society where the socially deprived sections including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Denotified Communities, Minorities and the Differently Abled are safe, secure and empowered. Carefully targeted schemes are implemented for families belonging to these socially deprived sections to ensure that they have access to education and to adequate employment and livelihood opportunities. Through the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation, Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Economic Development Corporation and the Tamil

Nadu Minorities Economic Development Corporation, the economic development of persons belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Denotified Communities and Minorities is ensured.

47) This Government is fully committed to the cause of social justice and will protect the 69 per cent reservation followed in the State for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Backward Class Muslims, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities. The 4 per cent reservation in employment for differently abled persons will be ensured and suitable posts identified in all categories to provide them employment.

48) I have outlined the policy priorities and programmatic interventions of the State Government. This House is the highest democratic deliberative body in the State and will now debate and discuss the contents of this address. I urge that the debate and discussion centre on the welfare of the people and the socio-economic development of the State. I am confident that each one of you will make a valuable contribution in this direction. I once again wish you a very happy and prosperous 2020 and a happy Pongal.

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Jai Hind