

Press Note:95

Date: 4.5.2007

SPEECH OF THIRU M.K.STALIN, HON'BLE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION, GOVT. OF TAMIL NADU, DELIVERED ON 4TH JULY, 2007 AT THE CONFERENCE OF STATE MINISTER IN-CHARGE OF RURAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION AT NEW DELHI.

Honourable Union Minister for Rural Development Thiru Raghuvansh Prasad Singh Ji, Hon'ble State Ministers in charge of Rural Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, Respected Secretary in charge of Drinking Water Supply, Government of India, Secretaries of States, Officers representing the Central and State Government, and Ladies and Gentlemen, Vanakkam.

It is indeed a great pleasure to be with this distinguished gathering of the Conference. I would like to thank the Government of India for organizing this Conference for sharing our views on the important subject of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation. I would also like to compliment the Government of India for choosing "Sustainability in Drinking Water Supply Project and Sanitation for All in the rural areas of the country by 2012" as the theme for the Conference. The United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre has rightly focused its attention on common man and has launched the historical programme of "Bharat Nirman" under which, provision of drinking water and sanitation to all those living in rural areas is an important component. As Bharat Nirman addresses the issue of accessibility, we need to come to grip with the problem of sustainability of schemes sooner rather than later.

The philosophy of inclusive growth has a long history in the State of Tamil Nadu ever since the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam came to power in 1967 under the leadership of Arignar Anna. Following the footsteps of Arignar Anna, Dr.Kalaignar, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has made social justice the fulcrum around which all Government programmes revolve.

The importance of water and sanitation cannot be over emphasized.

The renowned Tamil Poet Thiruvalluvar said :

“நீர் இன்று அமையாது உலகு”

which means that the world cannot exist without water.

Another proverb in Tamil emphasized the importance of sanitation as follows:

“நோயற்ற வாழ்வே குறைவற்ற செல்வம்”

which means that it is only health in life that is unlimited wealth.

Tamil Nadu is a forerunner in the implementation of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Schemes. Tamil Nadu under Dr.Kalaignar was the first state in the country to establish a statutory Board namely the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board in 1971 to plan and implement water supply schemes. The priority assigned to the Rural Water Supply Sector by the Government of Tamilnadu can be understood from the magnitude of investments made during the past 3 decades, which amounted to Rs.4,583 crores.

After the formation of Dr.Kalaignar's Government in 2006, 7,742 partially covered habitations have been provided with potable water supply. During the current year, another 9,000 partially covered habitations will be covered at a cost of Rs.602

crores. While higher levels of investments are required to provide water supply and sanitation to rural areas,

it is necessary to ensure that the schemes implemented are made sustainable. As far as water supply schemes are concerned source sustainability and system sustainability are the two important factors. It was Tamil Nadu Government under Dr.Kalaignar during 1997 which initiated a separate programme for construction of recharge structures to ensure source sustainability. So far, 3,186 Nos. of recharge structures have been constructed at a cost of Rs.109 crores.

It is with great pride that I inform that Tamil Nadu is the pioneer state in the country in the implementation of rain water harvesting measures. Rain Water Harvesting structures have been made an integral part of any building construction.

Consequent on the efforts, all the 1 lakh 72 thousand Government buildings, 48 lakh 11 thousand private buildings in urban and 66 lakh 67 thousand private buildings in rural areas have been provided with Rain Water Harvesting structures.

Due importance is also given to the habitations where quality of sources is affected. As per the resurvey, 5,574 habitations were identified to have quality problem. Out of this, so far 5,431 habitations have been provided with safe drinking water and the balance habitations will also be covered during the current year.

It is worth mentioning here that the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Dr.Kalaignar has recently launched the implementation of a massive combined Water Supply Scheme to provide safe drinking water to 5 Municipalities,

11 Panchayats and 3,163 rural habitations at an estimated cost of Rs. 616 crores to benefit the people living in this area which is perennially affected by drought and salinity of water sources.

Simultaneously we propose to implement a comprehensive programme for ensuring the sustainability of all ponds (locally called Ooranis) in this area which are the local sources of clean water.

Monitoring of sustainability and quality of drinking water is made through 1,286 observation wells to ascertain the changes in the water table. Further, periodical testing of water quality is also ensured through the State level laboratory in Chennai and 28 district level laboratories. I am proud to mention that the state level laboratory functioning at TWAD Board Head Office was the first Govt. Water Testing Laboratory in India to get ISO Certification. TWAD Board has developed a field water testing kit, which is simple and user-friendly and we propose to supply this kit to all the Panchayats this year.

Convergence of Total Sanitation Campaign with SGSY through the greater involvement of Women Self Help Groups has played a crucial role in the better implementation of Total Sanitation Campaign in Tamil Nadu. This has resulted in many women SHGs taking up the production of plastic and mosaic Rural Sanitary Pans and Sanitary Napkins as their economic activities.

Total Sanitation Campaign was launched in 1999-2000 only in four districts. At that time the coverage was only 15% and as a result of the concerted efforts taken, the coverage has increased to 68% in Rural households.

Tamil Nadu will achieve 100% sanitation coverage by 2007, in respect of schools and anganwadis.

During this year, 296 village Panchayats received Nirmal Gram Puraskar Award from His Excellency the President of India indicating the increased involvement of Panchayat Raj institutions in the Sanitation programme.

Now I wish to place the following issues for favourable consideration of the Government of India.

The Government of India should launch a new programme with 100% financial assistance for sustainability of drinking water sources. Further, a minimum 30 per cent of NREGS outlay should be earmarked for water harvesting structures.

In order to identify the ideal locations for construction of large recharge structures, it is necessary to use the remote sensing and GIS technologies and I urge the Government of India to fully fund the States' efforts in this regard.

The assistance under ARWSP needs to be increased substantially as the problem of slipping back of fully covered habitations is inevitable due to various reasons.

I also take this opportunity to request the Government of India to increase the subsidy amount for individual household toilets from the present Rs.1,200/- to at least Rs.5,000/- so that pucca and long lasting toilets can be constructed.

Finally I thank Government of India for giving me this opportunity to participate in this Conference and present the views of our State. I assure you, Sir, that with the help and support of the Government of India, Tamil Nadu will achieve the goals of Bharat Nirman well ahead of time. Vanakkam.

Issued by: DIPR., Chennai-9.