

Speech delivered by Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister
of Tamil Nadu at the Sesquicentennial Valedictory function of
Madras High Court on 8.9.2012

“அனைவருக்கும் எனது அன்பு கலந்த வணக்கத்தை முதற்கண் தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறேன்.

I am happy to address this august gathering. The City of Chennai has just celebrated its 373rd birthday on 22nd August, 2012. This is a fitting occasion to laud and extol the history and legal heritage of the High Court of Madras which has been and will remain a testament to the country's unparalleled justice dispensation system.

To appreciate the present and dream for the future, we have to be conscious of our past. Chennai's past belongs to this place here – behind Central Station, Wall Tax Road, Esplanade, the Fort St. George, the High Court and the sandy stretch west of Fort St. George.

Even today, children in this City are told about the 1914 World War and stories of the German ship Emden bombing Madras on 22nd September, 1914. The bombs were aimed at the Light House in the Madras High Court.

The Madras High Court has inherited a rich tapestry in its legacy of history, architecture and jurisprudence.

The High Court of Madras was established by The Indian High Courts Act, 1861, passed by the British Parliament. The Act authorised Queen Victoria to issue letters patent under the seal of the United Kingdom to erect and establish High Courts of Judicature. The High Court of Madras which saw its birth then has never looked back since and we are immensely proud to be part of the celebrations marking its 150th year. This celebration not only commemorates the age of this venerable institution but is also a celebration of its glorious history and a tribute to the legal luminaries who have walked the corridors of this great institution.

Justice is a constitutional mandate. The Judiciary is the repository of public faith. The legal system of our country, one of the oldest in the world, is not the creation of one man or of one day but is the cumulative fruit of the endeavour, experience, thoughtful planning and patient labour of a large number of people through many generations. It has altered itself as well as developed over the past few centuries to absorb inferences from the legal systems across the world. The Constitution of India is the fountainhead of the Indian Legal System.

In ancient India, the various sources of law relied upon by the kings of yore were *shrutis*, *smritis*, *puranas*, *dharmasutras*, *dharmashastras*, etc. The *Arthashastra* and *Manusmriti* were influential treatises in India, texts that were considered authoritative legal guidance.

Before Madras attained the position of a Presidency in 1665, it had two courts, namely, the Choultry Court and the Court of the Agent and Council. The Company was granted charter by King George I in 1726 to establish “Mayor's Courts” in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. These courts were converted as the first High Courts through letters patent authorized by the Indian High Courts Act passed by the British Parliament. Through the centuries, the High Court of Madras has charted its way, metamorphosing into a crucial front in the interpretation and enforcement of law in the State.

I have always been fascinated by the High Court building. It is with great awe that we recall the 12th of July, 1892, when this splendid Indo-Saracenic Court Complex built at a cost of 12,98,163 rupees was inaugurated with a 17 gun salute. The Madras High Court building is acknowledged by one and all, as the

finest High Court building in the whole of India - an architectural masterpiece. Nothing more fitting can be said of it than - It is a magnificent building with an equally grand judicial heritage. It is a constant reminder of the unbiased and judicious framework within which the High Court of Madras has evolved and the ideals it continues to cherish and uphold.

My Government has always been very sensitive to the needs of the High Court. In March, 2002, an amount of 56.45 crore rupees was sanctioned for establishing the Court buildings for the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court. The buildings at Madurai were inaugurated on 24th July, 2004.

Ever since my Government took charge again in May 2011, sanctions for 159.82 crore rupees for various court and court related buildings have been issued.

An amount of 10 crore rupees has recently been sanctioned for an Auditorium and Museum for which I have laid the foundation today.

To nurture and perpetuate our old tradition of having the best legal brains in the Country and to foster high quality legal education, a National Law School at Srirangam has been sanctioned at a cost of 100 Crore rupees. Preliminary works have commenced.

On this memorable occasion, I would like to pay a tribute to the contributions of all the legal stalwarts like Sir Muthuswami Iyer who became the first Indian judge of the Madras High Court, V. Krishnaswamy Iyer, S.Duraiswami Iyer, Sir V.Bashyam Iyengar, the first Advocate General - the list seems endless. The footprints they have left behind stand out as beacon lights for the generations to come. The strict code of ethics they practised has set the standard to be achieved for all time to come.

In the current fast changing socio-economic environment, litigation is on the increase. Litigants expect quick resolutions to their issues. The role of Advocates is very pivotal in ensuring that the litigant public are not put to hardship.

I have great pleasure in announcing an increase of financial assistance under the Tamil Nadu Advocates' Welfare Fund from 2 Lakh rupees to 5.25 Lakh rupees without any service period restriction in the event of death of an Advocate. A recurring annual Government grant will be given, up to 4 crore rupees, for the Tamil Nadu Advocates' Welfare Fund.

Judges and Lawyers from Tamil Nadu are renowned for their erudition and scholarship. Several constitutional amendments and illustrious judgements stemmed from this bank of legal acumen. It should be our endeavour to preserve this distinction.

Impartiality is the foundation stone of the administration of justice.

It is imperative that public faith in the country's judicial system is not eroded.

In conclusion, I am tempted to say "Men may come and men may go, but the High Court of Madras will go on forever."

I wish this function a grand success.

Thank you."

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