

**PRESS STATEMENT OF SELVI J JAYALALITHAA,**  
**HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU ON THE**  
**RAILWAY BUDGET PRESENTED ON 25.2.2016**

The Railway Budget for 2016-17 carried considerable weight of anticipation and apprehension. The Railway Minister seems to have been buffeted by the headwinds facing him in terms of the overall slowdown in the international economy and the possible impact of the 7<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission. With no new trains and no new railway lines announced, the budget belied the sense of expectation nursed by many segments of the population. With the Railway Capital Expenditure expected to be stepped up substantially to Rs.1.21 lakh crores, it is surprising that no specific projects were announced, including several projects in Tamil Nadu which I had requested through my letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2016.

In terms of concrete announcements, I welcome the announcement of the first ever Rail Auto Hub to be set up at Chennai, which would cement Chennai's position as a major automobile manufacturing centre not just in India but even internationally.

While I welcome the announcement of the North-South Dedicated Freight Corridor from Delhi to Chennai, both this corridor and the proposed East Coast Corridor which terminates in Vijayawada ought to have been extended to Thoothukudi. This would have fulfilled Tamil Nadu's long standing request to create a Chennai-Thoothukudi dedicated freight corridor.

In fact, this was one of the 3 projects-the Chennai-Thoothukudi freight corridor, Chennai-Madurai Kanniyakumari high speed passenger link and Coimbatore-Madurai high speed passenger link which are included in the Vision 2023 document, for which the Government of Tamil Nadu had indicated its in principle approval to be implemented through an SPV. Although the Railway Minister has mentioned that creating "New Structures" is one of the three Pillars of his Budget and also invoked the doctrine of co-operative federalism in entering into MOUs with the States, it is unfortunate that only a token consultation was held with State Governments before finalizing the Draft MOU which lacks clarity on a number of key issues. The present structure where 75 per cent of the equity and the entire land cost are to be met by the States, with all control with the Ministry of Railways, is simply unacceptable. My Government is prepared to engage with the Ministry of Railways on reworking the clauses of the MOU to ensure that a more balanced and acceptable draft emerges which duly recognizes the contributions to be made by State Governments.

I welcome the detailed attention to enhancing passenger amenities, including issues relating to safety of women, providing greater accessibility to the differently abled and senior citizens. The measures to improve redressal mechanisms by introducing more digital modes including an entirely 'app' based mechanism also appear to be positive measures. However, there are

two cautions I would like to sound. Many such measures appear to be contingent on various public-private partnership initiatives taking off. Further, many of the grievance redressal mechanisms appear to be moving exclusively to digital platforms. It should be ensured that if the public private partnership arrangements cannot be grounded, then the amenities still need to be created. Further, the quality of service and grievance redressal to the common person who may not be digitally literate nor own a smart phone should also be ensured and not confined to only those who are active on social media.

I also thank the Railway Minister for announcing the upgradation of the Railway Stations at the pilgrim centres of Nagapattinam and Velankanni. But there are stations at many other important pilgrim centres in Tamil Nadu including Srirangam and Rameswaram. Such stations should also be taken up for upgradation.

The upgradation of suburban transit systems in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata have been dealt with in great detail. However, in the case of Chennai, which possibly has the second most patronized suburban transit system after Mumbai, no specific plans for upgradation by the Indian Railways themselves have been announced, which is a major omission.

I would have been happy to hear a specific update on the Diamond Quadrilateral High Speed rail corridors which were announced with considerable fanfare in last year's Railway Budget.

I am happy that the Railway Minister has spared the common person and not levied any increase in the rail fares this year and put at rest some of the apprehensions on that score.

I set hope in two factors – I do hope that with the enhanced capital budget and better project management practices being put in place, the railway projects currently under implementation in the State, including the double lining of the entire stretch from Villupuram to Kanniyakumari, would be completed speedily. Secondly, the formulation of a National Railway Plan has been announced in which multi-modal integration and consultations with State Governments have been mentioned. I do hope that genuine consultation takes place with State Governments and our concerns are adequately addressed so that all parts of the country, including Tamil Nadu, can fully benefit from the Indian Railways, which is truly the infrastructure backbone of India.

On the whole, the Railway Budget has failed to meet the expectations of the people of Tamil Nadu.

**J JAYALALITHAA**  
Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu