

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter of Thiru **Edappadi K.Palaniswami**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

I am writing this letter drawing attention to the request already made in the letter dated 18.12.2016, recommending the award of "Bharat Ratna" to Late Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi J Jayalalithaa.

The late Hon'ble Chief Minister is very fondly remembered by the people of Tamil Nadu as Puratchi Thalaivi Amma. The highest civilian honour – Bharat Ratna would be the most fitting way to recognize the extraordinary public service, phenomenal achievements and the remarkable life of one of the most influential political leaders of independent India. Our revered leader, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma overcame many obstacles in her life to reach the pinnacle of political achievement – of capturing the hearts, minds and imagination of the people of Tamil Nadu. She did so through formulating people-friendly and growth oriented policies founded on empathy and compassion, ensuring their effective implementation through administrative acumen and sound fiscal management and carrying out her political and administrative tasks by the dint of determination, dedication, perseverance, and unstinted hard work. Vast sections of the Tamil population looked up to her as their leader, in whom they had implicit trust and in fact they deified her. Her initiatives won universal acclaim and were widely admired not only by other States in the country, but also by other countries.

The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, excelled in academics and extra-curricular activities from her early days as a student. Through her days as an accomplished and popular film actor, apart from being a consummate professional, she used every free moment of her time to read extensively and gain knowledge. In her early days in politics, she distinguished herself as an effective Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, speaking on important issues including State Autonomy and Internal Security, which won acclaim from the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi.

The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma overcame political vicissitudes and took over the mantle of the leadership of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. She led the AIADMK Party to a memorable electoral victory in 1991 and repeated the feat in 2001, 2011 and 2016, assuming office as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, a record six times for a total period of 15 years. In between, she also led her party to strong performances in the elections to the Lok Sabha, in 1998, 1999, 2009 and most memorably in 2014. What is particularly remarkable is the manner in which in the last 3 elections – in 2011, 2014 (Lok Sabha) and 2016, she has strongly consolidated the popular mandate of the AIADMK party in the State. Today, the AIADMK has 50 Members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and is the third largest political formation in the country. This is entirely due to the massive public support built up by our revered leader the late Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, through sustained performance and political acumen. She was unarguably the most charismatic, dynamic and determined political leader that India has ever seen. She relentlessly challenged the male dominated politics of Tamil Nadu that worked to block her at every step of the way. She reached the top on her own, with no political background and became Chief Minister, not once, but six times.

The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puartchi Thalaivi Amma was uncompromising in her insistence on the perfect maintenance of law and order in the State. The Police force has been adequately funded and provisioned and its morale maintained at a very high level as the Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, gave the Police Force with a free hand to ensure that law and order is well maintained. Tamil Nadu has remained a haven of peace and tranquillity due to the efforts of Puratchi Thalaivi Amma. Firm action was taken against extremist elements and terrorists. The activities of the forest brigand Veerappan were curtailed and the threat was finally neutralized by the Tamil Nadu Police.

The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma pioneered All Women Police Stations and Women Commando Force in the State and ensured adequate recruitment of women in the State Police and thereby gave a very high sense of safety for women and the vulnerable. The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma pioneered the path breaking Cradle Baby Scheme and the Girl Child Protection Scheme in the State which reversed the declining female sex ratio. The Cradle Baby Scheme was appreciated by Saint Mother Teresa as a great gift to children in Tamil Nadu and lauded the late Hon'ble Chief Minister's welfare projects for girls, destitute women and the aged.

The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma's schemes to promote enhanced work participation by women included the distribution of essential equipment like mixies, grinders and fans which eased the domestic drudgery of women, the increase in the maternity leave eligibility for women to 9 months, the enhanced financial benefits under the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme. Enhanced financial assistance under the Marriage Assistance Schemes and provision of 8 gram gold coin, incentivized female education by postponing the age of marriage. Empowerment of women through Self Help Groups and enhancement of livelihood through provision of economic assets to women including milch animals, sheep and goats was ensured. All these innovative measures remarkably enhanced the status of women in Tamil Nadu and proved to be model schemes for other States in the country.

Our revered leader, the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma transcended caste, creed and religion in her concern to ensure social justice and to protect the interest of minorities, weaker sections and the vulnerable. Our revered leader the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma was instrumental in securing the constitutional protection for Tamil Nadu's long standing policy of 69% reservation for Backward, Most Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The interests of the minorities were consistently protected and the State was kept free of communal strife.

When she assumed office as Chief Minister in 1991, Tamil Nadu's per capita income was still below the national average. Today it is nearly 75 per cent above the national average. Tamil Nadu's economy under the leadership of the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma registered the strongest consistent growth and Tamil Nadu has become the second largest State economy in India.

It is not only strong economic growth in Tamil Nadu that has been a significant achievement, but also under the leadership of the Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, Tamil Nadu is one State that has sustained its level of social sector expenditure. Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had in her first term in office itself formulated a "Social Safety Net" for which protected allocations were made in the Budget year after year in the areas of Health, Education, Nutrition, Welfare of Women and Children, Welfare of the Differently Abled, Welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Social Security. The allocations have consistently grown through her successive tenures. The scheme to distribute free bicycles to all students in Government and Aided Higher Secondary Schools ensured greater mobility, while the scheme to distribute laptops bridged the digital divide and a new generation was prepared for the challenge of

modern information technology. The Amma Unavagams (Canteens) which supply affordable and hygienic cooked food to the poor with dignity, is an initiative which has been internationally acclaimed and is now sought to be replicated elsewhere in the country. Such efforts have paid rich dividends in terms of human development achievements in the State.

Alongside the human development achievements recorded in the State, consistent investments in infrastructure were also championed by the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma. This sustained performance has won appreciation from development economists across the world and is now an established model of development. The Tamil Nadu Vision 2023 reflected the far sighted perspective of the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma to set Tamil Nadu on a high growth path trajectory by ensuring sustained investments in the infrastructure, education, health and other related sectors. The Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma's singular efforts ensured that the State which had a huge power deficit in 2011 when she assumed office, became a power surplus State by 2016. Major investments were also made in the Roads, Urban Development, Transport and related sectors.

Desalination, as a permanent solution for the perennial drinking water shortage in various parts of Tamil Nadu, was first initiated by the late Hon'ble Chief Minister. As early as 2001, Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma made Rain Water Harvesting mandatory in all Government and residential buildings which became an example for many States to follow. The high quality of human resources and of infrastructure and the very well maintained law and order situation have made Tamil Nadu a very attractive investment destination. The State continues to maintain its position with the largest number of factories and factory employees in the country. Even the President of the World Bank expressed his appreciation to the later Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma for the fact that usually Governments either follow a welfarist agenda or a business friendly agenda, but Tamil Nadu was a rare exception where the State continued to be business friendly even as it ensured that adequate attention and funding was provided for the welfare of the people. He had further stated that, "Tamil Nadu's record in implementing projects was really fantastic". The efforts of the later Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma to encourage major automobile manufacturers like Ford and Hyundai to invest in Tamil Nadu was instrumental in the State becoming home to many large automobile manufacturers and Chennai has come to be known as the Detroit of India. In addition, investment was encouraged in a range of sectors

and Tamil Nadu has one of the most diversified industrial bases in the country. When the Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma assumed office as Chief Minister in 2011, the State was crippled with severe power shortage. The Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma ensured that utmost priority was given to the power sector by enabling power projects and also by stepping up solar energy production which paved the path to make Tamil Nadu a power surplus State.

The Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma played a very big role in the development of the field of sports in the State over the last two and half decades. High cash incentives to the sportspersons and their coaches were instituted to encourage them. The later Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma also started reward schemes for promoting the not so popular disciplines like kabaddi, weightlifting, fencing, etc., which gave a boost for the sportsmen of Tamil Nadu.

Hon'ble Puratchi Thalaivi's foresight in implementing rain water harvesting to enrich the water table and to check global warming shows that she was a champion of environmental causes. Hon'ble Puratchi Thalaivi Amma was a multifaceted leader who demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities.

Coupled with performance in all spheres of governance and administration, the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma made a strong and persuasive case for ensuring that the autonomy of States was respected and State Governments were given the necessary legislative, administrative and fiscal space to function effectively to fulfil the aspirations of the people of the State. The late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma steadfastly and through legal avenues ensured that the rights of the State were protected – be it the Cauvery issue, Periyar issue or the rights of the Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu fishing in their traditional fishing waters of the Palk Bay.

The administrative responses to disasters that struck the State, in particular the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2005 received international acclaim. After the unprecedented floods in Chennai in December, 2015, Tamil Nadu disbursed flood relief to 14 lakh families by direct transfer to their bank accounts at one shot.

Above all, the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma represented the hopes and aspirations of millions of people of Tamil Nadu and Tamil people wherever they resided across the globe. The Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma was an inspirational figure. Her commanding leadership, brave decision making

capacity, shrewd understanding of politics and determination to fight for regional rights will be remembered forever. She gave voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless. She was responsible for the remarkable socio-economic transformation of Tamil Nadu. She brought peace, tranquility, discipline in all spheres of society and administration, and enviable prosperity to Tamil Nadu. Her appeal extends beyond Tamil Nadu and won her admirers and followers across the country. Such an inspirational figure who touched the lives of millions and whose life story will inspire millions more to strive for the greater public good through social and public service, richly deserves the nation's highest civilian honour. It would be a fitting tribute to a great leader, an able administrator, an inspiring icon who overcame many obstacles and vicissitudes in public life to devote her life for the benefit of millions of people.

The Tamil Nadu Cabinet resolved on 9.9.2018 to reiterate to the Government of India, its original decision taken in the Cabinet meeting held on 10.12.2016 recommending the award of "Bharat Ratna" to Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Selvi J Jayalalithaa, posthumously.

The Late Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma was astute, diplomatic and independent as a political leader. She had endeared herself to the people of Tamil Nadu by her words and deeds and her legacy lives on. People, particularly women adore her as their "AMMA". She was nationalistic in her outlook and progressive in her thinking. She tirelessly strove for the betterment of Tamil Nadu and Tamils. She rightly deserves the highest civilian award of our country, the "Bharat Ratna".

I reiterate our request to confer the Bharat Ratna posthumously on Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Late Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and request you to take immediate steps for the same.

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