

PRESS RELEASE

Speech of Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at the Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Southern Zonal Council on 12.12.2015 at Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh – read out by Thiru O.Panneerselvam, Hon'ble Minister for Finance & Public Works.

Hon'ble Union Home Minister
Shri Rajnath Singh Ji,
Hon'ble Chief Ministers,
Senior Officers of the Union Government,
Chief Secretaries and Senior Officers of the
participating States and Union Territory,

I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all the participants in this 26th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council.

Tamil Nadu, especially the city of Chennai and the adjoining districts of Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Cuddalore have recently witnessed rains and floods of unprecedented magnitude which has left a trail of devastation and destruction. I am directly supervising and guiding the relief and restoration operations which are still on.

At a time like this, it is difficult for me to attend this meeting in person. However, given the importance of this meeting and the need to continuously exchange views on subjects of mutual interest among neighbouring States, our delegation led by the Minister Finance and Public Works is attending the meeting.

I wish to briefly draw your attention to the subjects that comprise the current Agenda.

On the ongoing issue of security of fishermen, the Government of Tamil Nadu plans to supply 30,000 Distress Alert Transmitters (DAT) to registered motorized and mechanized fishing crafts to transmit weather advisories / warnings. This scheme will be implemented in a phased manner from the current year. While Government of India has released Rs.2 crores as first instalment for implementation of the scheme, I request the Government of India to extend 75% subsidy to ensure more fishermen avail of the scheme.

I would also like to bring to your notice that in respect of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes sanctioned under the fisheries sector to Tamil Nadu, funds to the extent of Rs.203.70 crores has to be released by the Government of India. This amount is sought for the completed and fast progressing works relating to the construction of Fishing Harbours at Chinnamuttom, Colachel, Poompuhar, Thengapattinam and the balance amount towards the National Savings-cum-Relief Scheme to be released for the years 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 and the subsidy assistance for providing Distress Alert Transmitters to 30,000 fisherfolk.

Further, the Government of Tamil Nadu has issued orders notifying 11 Fishing Ports, 36 Fish Landing Centres and 254 Fish Landing points of Tamil Nadu in order to ensure coastal security. Coastal security exercise 'Operation Hamla' is being conducted twice a year in coordination with the Coast Guard. Similarly, issue of ID cards to fishermen and registration of 39,401 fishing crafts has been completed. All efforts are being taken to ensure coastal security and security of fishermen.

The scheme of reimbursement of Central Excise Duty on High Speed Diesel (HSD) has a condition that the owners of the mechanized fishing boats should belong to the BPL category to avail the benefit under this scheme. This is a non-implementable condition. I have brought this to the notice of the Hon'ble Prime Minister in the Memoranda submitted to the Prime Minister on 03.06.2014 and on 07.08.2015. I reiterate that these impracticable and unworkable conditions may be relaxed for making this scheme operational.

Presently, the CRZ regulations hamper the creation of fisheries-related infrastructural facilities such as fishing harbours and fish landing centres, fish drying yards and processing centres, traditional boat building yards, ice plants etc. This affects the livelihood of fishermen. Hence all activities that are directly related to and have an impact on the livelihood and socio economic development of fishermen may be exempted from Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) restrictions.

I am happy to inform this forum that artificial reefs have been installed in 35 places along the Tamil Nadu Coast, funded by the Government of Tamil Nadu and implemented by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) to enhance the fishery resources. The Government of India may sanction funds liberally to install more such artificial reefs and fish aggregating devices in more places along the coast of India. Such measures can effectively enhance the fishery resources of the near shore waters.

The State Government has launched a scheme to promote Deep Sea Tuna Long Liners to enable fishermen to diversify from bottom trawling. I reiterate the request to the Government of India to sanction the

Comprehensive Special Package of Rs.1520 crores for deep sea fishing and infrastructure. This includes the purchase of Deep Sea Tuna Long Liners and development of infrastructure facilities at Mookaiyur, Rameswaram and Ennore fishing bases. Detailed Project Reports for promotion of Deep Sea Tuna Long Liners with an outlay of Rs.975 crores and the construction of a fish landing centre at Mookaiyur, Ramanathapuram District with an outlay of Rs.113.9 crores have already been submitted to the Government of India. These may be approved at the earliest.

I would now like to turn to the issue of the movement of Maoist cadres in the Tri-Junction area of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. The Maoist movements have been sighted in the tri-junction area since 2013 and Government of Tamil Nadu has been taking proactive steps in this regard to curb this menace. Combing operations have been intensified and as a result five Maoists have been arrested. The local police stations have been strengthened and the Forces have been augmented to meet the challenges. My Government has already requested the Ministry of Home Affairs to include the Nilgiris District in the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) list. We have also requested the reimbursement of security expenditure amounting to Rs.2.4 crores and the sanction of Rs.10.11 crores under Integrated Action Plan (IAP) to create infrastructure and service facilities for security agencies.

All Collectors of Districts adjoining Western Ghats have been sensitized to conduct mass contact meetings in tribal villages and to address their grievances relating to livelihood and infrastructure. Further, the Government is implementing Special programmes in the Districts of Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Madurai, Theni, Dindigul and The Nilgiris, with the aim of developing the remote backward areas in these Districts.

Concerted and coordinated action is required by all three States on both the security and development fronts to ensure that Maoist activity is not allowed to take root in this area.

As far as the Draft Road Transport and Safety Bill is concerned, my Government has already made its views clear. The Bill erodes the powers of State Governments. The proposed National Authority will take away the powers of State Government and as a result, the State Governments would not be able to implement welfare schemes in this sector. The Bill also erodes the fiscal autonomy and revenue resources of the States. The Bill envisages the privatization of licensing procedures which will be detrimental to the safety and security of the Public. In Tamil Nadu, the State Transport Undertakings provide bus services at a cost which is the lowest in the country. This may not be possible in the proposed new dispensation. Therefore, the draft Bill needs a complete overhaul after detailed consultation with the States.

In respect of transmission lines, it is pertinent to note that environment clearance is a major hurdle in the laying of transmission lines even in existing corridors. Therefore the regulations governing environment clearances need to be simplified for speedy erection of transmission lines and for better utilization of existing generating capacity in the country.

Tamil Nadu has been allotted about 563 MW of power from the total of 1000 MW produced by Unit-I of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant which had started commercial operations on 31.12.2014, has been shut down for maintenance from 24.6.2015. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited is yet to clearly indicate when the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant Unit-I will recommence production. We therefore request that the Nuclear Power Corporation of India may be instructed to recommence production in Kudankulam Unit early to meet the Tamil Nadu grid demand.

Further, we have been informed that Kudankulam Unit-II is undergoing final stages of commissioning activities and awaiting approval from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) for full commercial production. We request Government of India to expedite the commercial operation of Kudankulam Unit-II, so that another 563 MW of power can be added to the Tamil Nadu Grid at the earliest.

The Railway Minister has requested States to come forward to partner with the Indian Railways to form Special Purpose Vehicles for raising funds for the development of the rail network in the State. Tamil Nadu is a progressive State which is at the forefront of attempting innovative means of raising funds for infrastructure development. Government of Tamil Nadu would be willing in principle to enter into an MOU with the Ministry of Railways to set up an SPV to promote new railway projects in the State based on a mutually agreed priority.

In this context, given the previous experience of the State Government in promoting railway oriented projects with Central Government agencies including the Ministry of Railways and part financing some railway projects, I would like to make the following specific suggestions:

- Since the land is typically provided by the State Government, this should be treated as part of the State Government's equity contribution to the SPV at market value.
- Matching equity contributions from Ministry of Railways could be in cash or in the form of land owned by the Railways or other Central Government departments.
- In the case of equity contributions in cash, there should be assurances that these contributions by both sides would be made in time to

ensure that projects do not suffer delays due to lack of adequate funding.

- The governance structure should be well-balanced.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has been a leader in the implementation of Integrated Pest Management practices and has substantially reduced pesticide consumption over the years. There is a well established inspection regime for inspection and testing in Tamil Nadu. We in Tamil Nadu are as concerned as any other State about the harmful effects of pesticide and chemical residue in food.

Tamil Nadu also is a forerunner in implementing the Food Safety and Standards Act and is also strictly enforcing the Insecticide Act to ensure safe and permissible usage of pesticides by farmers. As a result of such pro-active measures taken by my Government, pesticide consumption has been reduced to one- fifth of the former levels in the last few years.

Farm produce from Tamil Nadu is as safe if not safer than that from any other area. Hence, unnecessary alarm about pesticide residue need not be raised as this causes undue hardship to the farmer and also sows doubts in the minds of consumers.

I would like to turn to the subject of Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases. Due to increased cross border movement of people necessitated by trade and tourism, there is increased risk of spread of diseases. Therefore there needs to be a strong mechanism for sharing of information. Already there is an existing mechanism for sharing of information relating to communicable diseases between neighboring states through border meetings and other mechanisms. In view of the new public health challenges such as Dengue, Swine flu, Chikungunya etc., there is a need for real time sharing of information among States related to communicable diseases so as to strengthen the communicable diseases management. I request the Ministry of Health to come up with a suitable mechanism to enable real time sharing of information on communicable diseases among the Southern States and Union Territories.

I have set out detailed views of our Government on the subjects included in the agenda with the hope that these deliberations will lead to meaningful solutions to the issues raised and will also facilitate the formulation of new approaches promoting intra regional co-operation.

Nanri, Vanakkam.

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