

Opening of New Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly & Secretariat Complex
Chennai, March 13, 2010
Prime Minister's Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Vannakkam!

I am delighted to be here once again with the people of Tamil Nadu. Let me begin by congratulating the Chief Minister and the Government of the State for the magnificent new Legislative Assembly and Secretariat Complex, the first phase of which is being opened today.

On this happy occasion I pay tribute to the great men and women who have brought distinction and honour to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly and Secretariat. Over nearly a century, the hallowed erstwhile premises of the State Assembly have been home to many great sons and daughters of India.

I salute, in particular, the memory of Thiru Rajagopalachari, Thiru Kamaraj and Thiru Anna Durai, who were all great leaders of our national movement, of free India and of the Tamil people.

Inspired by their leadership and example we have seen such great political leaders as Thiru C Subramaniam, Dr. R Venkatraman and Thiru M G Ramachandran serve our nation with great distinction. Each one of them has contributed to national development and the progress of Tamil Nadu. Thiru C Subramaniam played a historic role in India's liberation from hunger and dependence on imported food by providing leadership to the Green Revolution. Dr Venkataraman was the architect of Tamil Nadu's industrial development. MGR set an example for all of us with his mid-day meals scheme, which our government has improved upon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, it gives me immense pleasure to be here in the presence of Kalaignar, Dr Karunanidhi. It is only appropriate that the decision to construct this new complex was taken by this giant of Tamil Nadu politics, who is serving his eleventh term as Member of the Legislative Assembly and his fifth term as Chief Minister. The government of the United Progressive Alliance has greatly benefited from the wisdom and leadership of Kalaignar Karunanidhi. I have turned to him often for advice. Karunanidhi has been in our public life for over half a century. We are truly fortunate that we can draw on his experience and wisdom in managing the affairs of our nation.

Under Karunanidhi's leadership, Tamil Nadu has marched forward as a model of development in our country. It has attained new heights in rural development and agrarian transformation. Tamil Nadu is the hub of India's dynamic automobile industry. It has some of the most modern textile mills and a vibrant services economy.

The State is also the cynosure of our nation's eyes because of the high quality of its educational system and its urban development programmes. It has a proud tradition of a very responsive and efficient district and municipal administration. On many fronts today, Tamil Nadu is a role model for the rest of our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I say this today because we are here to witness the opening of a new Legislative Assembly and Secretariat building. The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly is one of the oldest legislative forums in the country, having come into existence in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935. It has produced parliamentarians of great eminence. It has been home to great leaders who have strengthened and enriched our democracy and our country.

It is the legislators and the administrators of Tamil Nadu that have laid the foundation for Tamil Nadu's development. If Tamil Nadu is one of our foremost states, one of the most agriculturally, industrially and educationally developed States, it is because of the high quality of its political leadership and administrative machinery.

I compliment the members of the panchayat raj institutions, of the municipalities, of the State assembly and of all the administrative services for the good work they have done to take Tamil Nadu forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

But we cannot and should not rest on our laurels.

India is on the cusp of change. The time has come for a qualitative change and a quantitative leap forward. As a nation, we must strive to do things differently.

I hope the young people of Tamil Nadu will show the way forward in doing things differently. We need a more educated people, a more efficient economy, a more equitable society. We also need a creative people, an innovative people, a people who don't just try to cross hurdles but know how to avoid them. Finding new ways to go forward. New ways to do old things. The age of innovation is upon us. If we do not innovate, we will be left behind by history.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are the proud inheritors of the rich legacy of the Dravidian Movement and its quest for social justice and equity. No society can move forward without these ideals being put into practice. I hope that these ideals will continue to guide the work of the Tamil Nadu Assembly and the Tamil Nadu Government.

Legislatures are sacred places. They are places for working for the cause of our sisters and brothers who have bestowed upon us the privilege to represent them. They are places for upholding the ideals of our Constitution and indeed for bringing them into action.

Legislators appraise contemporary legislation and enact new laws. To discharge their responsibility effectively they should not only be alert and well informed but should also be alive to the basic concerns of Indian polity. All power has to be regarded as societal trust and to be used for public good. Only then would our legislators be able to work effectively towards providing our people a life of dignity and self respect. Legislators are also watchdogs of public finances and they must ensure that there is no wasteful use of public money, and that the resource mobilization processes do not adversely affect the incentives for savings, risk bearing and the quest for entrepreneurship and pursuit of innovation. Collectively they need to deal sternly with corruption and inefficiency in our governance processes. All this is a tall order but I am sure that in these new premises we will witness new heights of legislative competence and legislative propriety, with discussions being guided by the spirit of tolerance, accommodation and deep and abiding concern for the well being of the common man.

I am also sure that in these new premises, where the voice of the Tamil people will be articulated by their representatives, we will hear the echo of your glorious past. I hope the members of the Tamil Nadu legislature and its civil servants will think big, think out-of-the-box and show the way forward to the rest of the country.

I hope in these premises we will see a new India speaking, a new India being guided, a new India being inspired by the example of the Tamil people. I wish you the best in years to come. May your path be blessed.

Jai Hind