

**Speech of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami
at the Fourth Governing Council Meeting of NITI Aayog
held on 17th June, 2018 at New Delhi**

Hon'ble Prime Minister,

Hon'ble Home Minister,

Hon'ble Union Ministers,

Hon'ble Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Governors,

Hon'ble Vice Chairman and Members of NITI Aayog,

Senior Officials!

Vanakkam!

I thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for convening this meeting. This is an important forum that allows us to discuss matters of shared interest.

- ❖ *Vision Tamil Nadu 2023* was launched by our late Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, on 24.3.2012. The goals of our vision document constitute monitorable and measurable outcomes with positive impact on the lives of our people. This document is widely acclaimed as a path-breaking model in perspective planning for good governance, inclusive growth and development that touches the life of the every citizen in Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ Every State in India is culturally and socially diverse. Their development needs are different. Schemes formulated by State Governments respond to varied local realities and needs. It is, therefore, necessary that India's 'Development Agenda 2022' is built on State perspective plans, as well as incorporate flexibility. For this to happen, the Government of India has to take on a new role – the role of a facilitator. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sir, this is definitely possible under your dynamic leadership.

2. AGRICULTURE SECTOR:

MEASURES TO DOUBLE FARMER'S INCOME

- ❖ I am convinced that unless farm production and productivity is improved through sustainable agriculture and water-efficient irrigation, real improvements in farmers' income would take time to realize. We need to promote agricultural diversification through horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries and

institutionalize a workable comprehensive social safety net to cushion farmers from sudden economic and natural shocks.

- ❖ The focus of this meeting on doubling farmers' income has to be achieved by a combination of measures such as e-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), soil health cards, backward and forward market linkages, water conservation and enhancement in water use efficiency for irrigation purposes.

(a) e-NAM (e-National Agriculture Market)

- ❖ Allocation under the e-NAM Scheme at Rs.75 lakh per market hinders them from realizing their full potential. In Tamil Nadu, there are 30 regulated markets being integrated with e-NAM in two phases. Amendments have already been made in the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Marketing Regulation Act, 1987, to include e-trading, single point market fee levy and unified single licence. I am pleased to note that the Government of India has already approved 15 regulated markets each, under Phase I and II. To strengthen infrastructure and assaying facilities in the 30 regulated markets, I request the Union Government to release the balance amount of Rs. 13.50 crore under this Scheme.

(b) SOIL HEALTH CARD

- ❖ Improving and maintaining soil fertility is vital for obtaining potential yield of crop varieties and doubling income of farmers. We were the first in the country to launch distribution of 'Farmers Integrated Handbook', the brain child of my most respected leader, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in 2011-2012. In 2018-2019, in order to ensure 100% adoption of soil health card based fertilizer recommendation, we plan to take up a pilot project in 100 villages in the State. In addition, 4270 demonstrations are proposed in the current year's action plan to show the effects of soil health card based recommendations. I would like to point out that this Scheme will be successful only if soil testing facilities are taken to the farmers and they are motivated to use these facilities on a regular basis.

(c) RURAL / AGRICULTURE HAAT

- ❖ Improvement of rural agriculture market is key to increase market access for agricultural commodities. The Central Government should support the States in establishing Farmers' Cooperative Market for fruits and vegetables in major urban areas with required infrastructure and transport facilities. This would eliminate middlemen and enable small farmers to directly sell their produce and obtain best price in urban areas.
- ❖ Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), it is proposed to improve 50 village shandies

during the current year with proper facilities at a cost of Rs.40 lakh each.

(d) MGNREGS AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS WATER CONSERVATION

- ❖ In Tamil Nadu, out of 385 blocks, 179 have been identified as over-exploited and 36 as critical as regards the availability of ground water. Of these, 15 blocks have been designated as both over-exploited and critical by the Central Ground Water Resources Board. To improve water resource conservation under MGNREGS during 2017-2018, Government of Tamil Nadu has taken a number of initiatives.
- ❖ These include construction of 20,000 check dams, 250-KM of stone bunding, 15,000 KM of earthen bunding, afforestation activities, 15,000 recharge pits / shafts and 2 lakh individual and community soak pits for managing grey water release from rural households, etc.
- ❖ Satellite maps are used for planning and execution of water conservation works. Under MGNREGS, afforestation activities with 69 lakh saplings are being carried out in co-ordination with Forest Department in the targetted areas especially the Government / Common Lands, Village Panchayat lands to increase the green cover. Avenue plantation on both sides of roads is also being undertaken.

KUDIMARAMATH SCHEME

- ❖ 'Kudimaramath' is an age old practice in Tamil Nadu wherein waterbodies were maintained through community participation. Now, Tamil Nadu Government has taken a policy decision to revive this scheme and restore water bodies through user communities. Works under Kudimaramath include maintenance works in supply channels, canals, tanks, etc. 10% of the estimate cost is borne by the Farmers' Organizations in the form of labour or materials or cash. For the year 2016-17, Government sanctioned a sum of Rs.100 crore for 1,519 works covering 30 Districts. 1,511 works will be taken up this year at a cost of Rs.328.95 crore for rehabilitation of tanks.

3. AYUSHMAAN BHARAT –

(a) Health and Wellness Centre

(b) Pradhanmantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission

- ❖ I am pleased to note that the Ayushman Bharat Programme launched by the Government of India draws heavily from the Tamil Nadu model. The Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS), a flagship programme of the

Tamil Nadu Government, has made tremendous strides in providing timely and quality in-patient care to the poor and needy families. It envisions a joint public and private sector role in promoting access and delivery of quality health care services to poor people. While we plan to dovetail the Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme with the National Health Protection Scheme under the Ayushman Bharat programme, we seek flexibility to retain our model as it is tried and tested, enjoys high acceptability amongst people and does not weaken the public sector health care delivery. Since 2012, CMCHIS has benefited 26.86 lakh persons at a cost of Rs.4762.75 crore.

- ❖ Since 2016, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) project has been successfully piloted in three districts covering 67 Health and Wellness Centres (HSCs) and 17 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) including Block PHCs in Tamil Nadu. We are scaling up the UHC programme in additional 39 blocks. In the current financial year, we plan to transform State's 985 Health Sub-centres into Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) with the Government of India support at an estimated outlay of Rs.82.03 crore.
- ❖ Tamil Nadu has been making substantial investments in the social sector, especially in health, education, child care and social security. The outcome of this sustained strategy is a healthier population. We have already achieved Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Tamil Nadu is well poised to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) much ahead of the target year 2030. These accomplishments are made possible only due to the far-sighted schemes and programmes launched by my late leader, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma. Novel programmes such as Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme, Menstrual Hygiene Programme, Amma Maternity Nutrition Kit, Amma Baby Care kit, Amma Mahaperu Sanjeevi, just to name a few, have received wide acclaim amongst the people.

4. POSHAN MISSION (National Nutrition Mission)

- ❖ Tamil Nadu has also been a forerunner in its efforts to improve nutritional status of children from 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers. The National Nutritional Mission builds on the Tamil Nadu experience. Total of eleven districts in the State are being covered under Phase I and II. The process of hiring and placement of staff is expected to be completed by end of June 2018. 21 modules for incremental learning approach have been translated into Tamil for orientation purposes. Guidelines for community based events are ready and Training of Trainers for the Phase I has also been completed.

5. MISSION INDRADHANUSH

- ❖ Mission Indradhanush vaccination programme is under implementation in Tamil Nadu in four phases. So far we have vaccinated 1.68 lakh mothers and 6.85 lakh children under the four phases. We are also taking necessary steps to cover left out and drop out children and mothers under the Special Intensified Mission Indradhanush in 1477 villages in the State.

6. ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

- ❖ In Tamil Nadu, Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar Districts have been identified as Aspirational Districts. These two districts being socio-economically backward, I urge the Government of India to sanction a Medical College in the 2018-19 financial year to both the districts under the Central Sector Scheme. The Dental Council of India and Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare may also be directed to approve the establishment of a State Government funded Government Dental College in Virudhunagar, by relaxing the distance norms.

7. 150th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

- ❖ I thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for taking measures to celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, in a befitting and grand manner. I have already given my detailed suggestions in the meeting convened on 2.5.2018 by the Hon'ble President of India. I highlight the important suggestions:
 - a) 'Gandhi Green Earth Award' may be instituted on the lines of the Nobel Prize and awarded annually to individuals or institutions from a global pool.
 - b) I request that the Gandhigram Rural Institute in Tamil Nadu, now a deemed university to be upgraded as a Central University and a Centre for Excellence for Gandhian Philosophy and Rural Development be established at an outlay of Rs.500 crore.
 - c) An additional corpus fund of Rs.10 crore may be sanctioned to the Gandhi Memorial Museum in Madurai which houses rare artefacts of Gandhiji. It was opened in 1959 and is presently being maintained from the interest accrued on its corpus fund of Rs.5 crore.

OTHER ISSUES

Inter State Rivers

- ❖ Tamil Nadu is entirely dependent on water from inter-state rivers, in particular, the Cauvery. We seek immediate operationalization of the Cauvery Water Management Authority and the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee for effective implementation of the Final Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as modified by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.
- ❖ The Government of India should take lead in inter-linking of rivers by nationalisation of all the inter-state Rivers which alone offers the promise of creating a framework that would allow optimal utilization of water resources amongst States. My revered leader, the Late Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, had repeatedly urged the Government of India to implement the interlinking of the Mahanadhi-Godavari-Krishna-Pennar-Palar-Cauvery-Vaigai-Gundar Rivers and also to divert the surplus waters of the west flowing Pamba and Achankovil Rivers to Vaippar in Tamil Nadu.

State Finances

- ❖ Hon'ble Prime Minister, Tamil Nadu has always been a fiscally responsible State. Unlike the Government of India, States in general and Tamil Nadu in particular, have limited powers to mobilize resources. No one in the Government of India other than the Prime Minister would perhaps understand this better.
- ❖ With growing aspirations of the people, the resource needs of States for financing development have been on the increase. In the post-GST era, flexibility of States to augment their own resources and mobilize more is very limited. It is time we think of a new model of resource sharing to effectively deal with the present development challenges.
- ❖ As is the practice in developed countries, one suggestion is to levy and appropriate all indirect taxes which can be given to the States and the Union Government can retain the direct tax revenues. Alternatively, the power of collection and appropriation of personal income tax can be vested with the States as this would take care of growing needs of the States to implement development programmes. In this way, the present complicated process of devolution of resources can be simplified.

Finance Commission

- ❖ I wish to draw the kind attention of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to the unfair treatment meted out to Tamil Nadu by successive Finance Commissions. While the 14th Finance Commission, increased the overall devolution of taxes to the States from 32 percent to 42 percent, it reduced inter-se share of Tamil Nadu in the divisible pool from 4.969 percent to 4.023 percent. As a result, Tamil Nadu suffered an annual resource loss of Rs.6,000 crore.
- ❖ The 15th Finance Commission would pain us further, unless some Terms of Reference (ToR) are corrected. Some of them are not in line with the principles of federalism enshrined in our Constitution and have to be reconsidered. I have raised these issues earlier as well. I am using this forum to reiterate our concerns again.
- ❖ The Constitution (Forty-Second Amendment) Act, 1976 imposed a freeze on the population figure for readjustment at the 1971 census, as being the basis for all delimitation until after 2001 Census. This was extended by Constitution (Eighty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 2011 till 2026 so as to ensure that progressive States which have brought their population under control are not penalized for proactive action. In this context, mandating the 15th Finance Commission to use population data of 2011 Census for its recommendations is, unfair and penalizes States like Tamil Nadu for being progressive. And hence, must be revised.
- ❖ I also request that Para 7 (iii) and Para 7 (viii) in the ToR of the 15th Finance Commission be revised as they would propel the Finance Commission into adopting a subjective and out-of-context approach while working out the principles of resource sharing.

Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme

- ❖ Though education is not covered in the agenda, I would like to draw the kind attention of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to revisions made by the Government of India, to the guidelines of the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme. The changes, inter-alia, entail to stop reimbursement of fees claimed against management quota / spot admission seats in any institution/ university with effect from April 2018. The new guidelines also change the basis of committed liability over and above which 100% is borne by the central government. This will end up in a situation where Central Sector Scheme will have to be fully funded by State Government. The revision has effectively blunted our ability to improve the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education any further.

- ❖ In Tamil Nadu, large number of students from poor scheduled castes and scheduled tribes households' avail benefits under Post-Matric scholarship scheme through management quota seats in self-financing colleges. It has been of immense help to students, several of whom are first generation graduates, in joining higher educational institutions. Tamil Nadu prides itself in having achieved Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of more than 45%. Apart from blocking our efforts to improve GER, the revision has fast become cause for social resentment and unrest, as it is against social justice.
- ❖ Moreover, the reimbursement of dues over the years under this Scheme, pending from Government of India to Tamil Nadu exceed Rs.1,804 crore as of March 2018. I seek the personal intervention of the Hon'ble Prime Minister in resolving this impasse. I also suggest that this Scheme may be funded under a 60:40 sharing formula between Centre and the States, as in the case of other Central Schemes.

I have presented the views of my Government and people of Tamil Nadu before this august gathering. I sincerely hope that our interests and concerns would receive utmost positive consideration. I would like to assure that Tamil Nadu would continue to march ahead and make all contributions necessary to ensure growth and prosperity for the people of India.

Nanri.

Vanakkam.

Issued By :- DIPR, Secretariat, Chennai - 9.