

Speech of
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
at Connect 2007 function
on 17.9.2007, Trade Centre, Chennai.

Hon'ble Minister for Local Administration,
 M.K. Stalin,

Thiru Gopal Srinivasan, Chairman, C.I.I., Tamil Nadu

Thiru S. Mahalingam, Chairman, Connect 2007

Thiru Lakshmi Narayanan,

Thiru Deepak Puri,

Thiru L.K. Tripathi, I.A.S., Chief Secretary,

Hon'ble State Ministers,

Secretaries to Government,

Captains of Industry, and

Friends, Vanakkam.

"To achieve what we have said and say what we achieve" has always been my motto.

It is exactly a year ago at Connect 2006 that I spoke about an ambitious vision that Tamil Nadu shall be the ICT Hub of South Asia by creating a knowledge driven ecosystem, leveraging entrepreneurship and promoting socially inclusive growth to achieve a 25% production share of the Indian ICT industry by 2011. I am happy to share with all of you that we are steadily marching ahead to achieve this vision.

The facts speak for themselves. Software exports from Tamil Nadu have crossed the Rs.20 thousand Crore mark. This marks a 46% growth over the last year. Large IT complexes are coming up all over the State. They are expanding their operations not only in Chennai but in other parts of the State. I am confident that the export figures this year will be more robust than that of the last year. I commend the software companies that have won awards today for export performance.

To add to the phenomenal growth in software, is the rise of the Electronic hardware manufacturing sector in Tamil Nadu.

This software-hardware combination is unique in the world. This gives me the confidence that we will achieve the goal.

Many of you who attended Connect 2006 would recall, what I said in my speech last year. To recount, I quote, "I am convinced that ICT can provide opportunities for touching the untouched, approaching the unapproached and bringing the hitherto excluded strata of society within the ambit of inclusive development". To give practical shape to this conviction, we have devised a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, we are bringing in geographical inclusiveness by establishing IT-ITES Special Economic Zones in Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy, Salem, Hosur and Tirunelveli.

On the other hand, we are starting special skill development initiatives that would enable the youth of this State to join the mainstream of the ICT revolution.

The establishment of the ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu and the Finishing School are only two of the many initiatives that are in the pipeline. Skill development is a priority area for my Government and with these we will ensure that employment is generated all over the State. I invite the C.I.I. and all of you present to actively partner us in these initiatives. Together let us create a model of inclusive development where access to jobs will not be the preserve of a few privileged institutions or those belonging to elite groups but would be open to all.

I am aware that to sustain the momentum, huge investments are required to strengthen the physical infrastructure. Our Government is committed to provide world class infrastructure in order to support the growth of Industry in general and the ICT Industry in particular in Tamil Nadu.

At the same time, I am acutely conscious that the human resources of the State have to be further strengthened. On my initiative, the Government of India is setting up an Indian Institute of Information Technology for Design and Manufacturing near Chennai. I have also requested the Government of India to set up an additional I.I.T. at Madurai, I.I.S.E.R. at Trichy and an I.I.M. at

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Coimbatore. Our Government has taken special steps to strengthen the system of technical education in the State.

Training is a necessary input to improve the skill of the large number of technically qualified youth. C.I.I. can play a leading role in setting up Training Institutes in different parts of the State in collaboration with large Industrial Houses which will benefit the students as well as the Industries. I would also like to highlight a significant development that has taken place in the field of local language computing. During Connect 2006 last year, the Tamil Virtual University had handed over to me a set of recommendations on the need for bringing out a new set of standards for Tamil computing. I am happy to share with you all, that substantial progress has been made on this front and a new encoding system for Tamil is being evolved. This would be a historical step in the area of Tamil computing.

Action, they say, speaks louder than words. Our actions so far have clearly demonstrated our will to forge ahead. The results so far have been extremely satisfying, but we are not content to rest on our laurels. Our journey continues and we have indeed miles to go before we can build a Tamil Nadu free from hunger, want, unemployment and inequality. Together we will realise our goal and take Tamil Nadu and its people to the top in all spheres.

I am happy to note that Mosenbear ~~Group~~ has decided to invest 2000 crs in Tamil Nadu.

I have great pleasure in inaugurating Connect 2007.

