

**Speech of Thiru R. Sakkarapani, Hon'ble Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Government of Tamil Nadu at the meeting of the State Food Ministers on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2021 chaired by Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles to discuss the Model Community Kitchens Scheme to address hunger and malnutrition in the country and other issues.**

Vanakkam!

Good Afternoon!

Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Hon'ble Union Minister of State,

Hon'ble Ministers from all States and Union territories Senior officials from the Union, States and Union territories.

I am deeply honoured and privileged to participate and contribute in this candid and comprehensive discussion on "Model Community Kitchen Scheme to address hunger and malnutrition issues in the country".

On behalf of our **Hon'ble Chief Minister Thiru M.K. Stalin**, I would like to thank you for providing us of this opportunity to present about the steps and strides taken by our Government in ensuring Food and Nutritional Security for all.

Tamil Nadu has been implementing the Universal Public Distribution System for more than 40 years, extending the umbrella of Food security to all categories of people without discrimination of income or social status even after introduction of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Tamil Nadu is a pioneer State that has opened new vistas in policy framework and implemented programmes for addressing food and nutritional requirements of its people. Our great leader, the then **Chief Minister, Muthamizharignar, Kalaignar** introduced the Special Public Distribution System to supply 1 Kg of Tur dhal, 1Kg of Urad dhal and 1 Litre of Palmolein oil to all the cardholders at highly subsidized rates to improve the nutritional requirements of common people.

Besides, Government led by the **then Chief Minister Muthamizharignar, Kalaignar** introduced supply of egg once in a fortnight to all school going children in 1989 through the Nutritious Meal Programme. Again in 2010 he enhanced the supply of egg in all five working days to provide nutritional food to all school going children. During 2021-22, forty two lakh thirteen thousand six hundred and seventeen belonging to primary, upper primary high and higher secondary schools children are benefitted.

Annadhanam Scheme is another programme being implemented by the temples in Tamil Nadu. A wholesome food is provided to approximately sixty six thousand devotees and poor people per day at a cost of Rupees Sixteen and Fifty Thousand lakhs.

Noteworthy to mention here is the fact that our Government headed by our beloved leader and the Honourable Chief Minister Thiru. M.K. Stalin, immediately after assuming office, has distributed 14 grocery items at a cost of Rupees Nine hundred and Seventy eight crores to all the 2.09 crore family card holders along with cash grant of Rupees four thousand as Corona relief in May and June 2021.

Besides we are also providing twenty nutritious food items including Urad Dhall, Moong Dhall, Gram Dhall, Aatta and Ghee at an estimated cost of Rupees one thousand one hundred and sixty one crores on the eve of Pongal Festival in January 2022 to 2.15 crore family card holders.

### **Community Kitchens in Tamil Nadu**

Government of Tamil Nadu has been running about six hundred and fifty Community Kitchens through local bodies throughout the State for several years in order to provide hygienic food at a highly subsidized price to benefit the poor and needy people.

Out of these four hundred and three are in Greater Chennai Corporation limits.

One hundred and five are functioning in fourteen Municipal Corporations, one hundred and thirty eight in Municipalities and four in Village Panchayats.

The above number includes canteens being run in various Government hospitals for the benefit of patients' attendants and out patients. On an average a canteen serves approximately between two hundred to four hundred meals per day. During total lockdown on account of Corona pandemic as well as natural calamities, food is served free of cost to anyone who queues up for a meal.

These Community Kitchens provide meal at highly subsidized rates viz., one idly for Rupee one, Pongal for Rupees five, Variety rice (Sambar Rice, Curry Leaves Rice and Lemon Rice) for Rupees five and Curd Rice for Rupees three two Chapathis with Dhall for Rupees three, while the average cost per meal comes to between Rupees twenty five to Rupees thirty per beneficiary.

Presently, the scheme is funded by the State Government and Local Bodies. Every year the State Government and urban Local Bodies are spending around Rupees three hundred crores for the implementation of this scheme.

Keeping in mind the need of Community Kitchens in providing a food safety net to the most vulnerable, the Government of Tamil Nadu proposes to open an additional

five hundred Community Kitchens to be called “Kalaingar Unavagam” as I had already mentioned in the last meeting.

**I would like to make the following suggestions for a Pan India Community Kitchen Model:-**

- i) While required land for setting up the Community Kitchen may be provided by the State Government and Local Bodies, capital expenditure towards building, furniture, utensils, etc may be borne by Government of India along with hundred per cent recurring expenditure for food grains, transport, salary for staff etc.
- ii) These Community Kitchens are open to all the people in Tamil Nadu. Our experience has been that only the most deserving persons are coming to these facilities; hence making it restrictive based on some exclusion criteria may not be required. In fact, in Tamil Nadu these Community Kitchens are open to migrant workers from other States as well.
- iii) In our experience we find the community kitchens highly useful during all times but these become significantly more important and of dire need during times of natural disaster or total lockdowns. Therefore, the scheme may have flexibility in terms of ramping up their numbers and supplies.
- iv) In Tamil Nadu we are providing three meals in Greater Chennai and two meals in other places. It is suggested that minimum of two meals may be provided through these Community Kitchens.
- v) For a vast Country like India, any uniform system or one single model may not be desirable. It will be appropriate that States must be given the freedom and flexibility within the broad framework and guidelines to decide on the actual model and functioning of the Community Kitchens.

I am sure that above suggestions will be considered and form part of the proposed Model Community Kitchen Scheme by the Union Government.

I assure that under the visionary leadership and guidance of our beloved leader and **Hon'ble Chief Minister of our State Tamil Nadu, Thiru M.K. Stalin** will work together with the Union Government and Governments of other States and Union territories towards achieving a hunger and malnutrition free India.

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