

P.R.No: 319

Date: 24.06.2021

Speech of the Honourable Minister for
Public Works, Highways and
Minor Ports,

Shri.E.V.Velu at the 18th Maritime State
Development Council held through
Video Conferencing on 24.06.2021

Vanakkam to all.

Hon'ble Union Minister of State Shri **Mansukh Mandaviyaji**, the Ministers in-charge of Ports of Coastal States, the Officials, Ladies, and Gentlemen.

At the outset I thank the Hon'ble Union Minister for State for inviting me to the meeting and also thank the **vibrant and dynamic** Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Hon'ble **Thiru. M.K.Stalin** who has authorised me to attend this Virtual meeting on behalf of Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu State is keen to tap all the potentials of blue economy in the form of

Coastal Development which is beneficial for the people of Tamil Nadu.

I thank the Government of India for taking up the developmental works with financial support through **Sagarmala / Coastal Berth Scheme** for Cuddalore and Kanniyakumari ports.

As requested by our Honourable Chief Minister through a Memorandum which was handed over to the Honourable Prime Minister in person on 17.06.2021, I wish to furnish the two important subjects before the Honourable Union Minister of State for your kind consideration.

1. **Sethusamudram** Ship Canal project is the dream project of the people of Tamil Nadu which may be taken up by the Government of India at the earliest.
2. Master Plan for **VOC** Port has been prepared for creation of required infrastructure to develop VOC Port as Transshipment Hub. Government of India may consider this plan for expansion.

In this scenario, the revised Draft Indian Ports Bill 2021 was received by the State Government for furnishing our remarks only on 14.06.2021.

We have had only a short time to study the Bill. However, I wish to clearly state that the provisions of the Draft Indian Ports Bill 2021 have long term policy implications for Coastal States and the subject is of utmost importance. The major areas of concern of our State Government are the following:

- (i) As per the existing Indian Ports Act, 1908, the powers to plan, develop, regulate and control the minor ports vests with the State Government. However, the draft Bill would take away many of these powers from the State Government.

- (ii) The Maritime State Development Council (MSDC) is at present an advisory body. The provisions of the draft Bill are such that it would start functioning as a regulatory body for the minor ports. Further, the composition of the MSDC is being modified with addition of the officials of only Central Government and not the State Governments.
- (iii) The Rule making power with regard to minor ports at present vests with the State Governments. As per the draft Bill, the Rule making power with respect to many aspects will go to the Central Government.

- (iv) At present, the appellate powers against the orders of the State Maritime Board lies with the respective State Governments. However, as per the draft Bill, this power will go to the Appellate Tribunal which has been constituted by the Central Government basically for the major ports.
- (v) The State Government would be sending detailed comments after due scrutiny of the draft bill.

Under the provisions of the **Indian Ports Act, 1908**, the minor ports in the country have developed well. The draft Bill will totally dilute this good system. Taking

into consideration these concerns of our State Government, I would like to express the Government's opposition to the move of diluting the powers of the State Government and converting MSDC into a regulatory body.

I would like to request that the present system with regard to the powers of the State Governments in matters of minor ports should not be disturbed in any manner.

I thank the Hon'ble Union Minister for giving me this opportunity in addressing the views of Tamil Nadu in this **18th MSDC** meeting.