

**PRESS STATEMENT OF SELVI J JAYALALITHAA,
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU – 26.2.2013**

The Railway Budget presented in Parliament today is uninspiring and totally lacks any long term perspective with regard to infrastructure development in the country. The Railway Budget places an even greater burden on the already overburdened common people through an indirect passenger fare increase by way of levy of higher fees and an increase in the freight tariff which will cause an increase in prices of essential commodities.

No concrete measures nor significant increases in investment which are the need of the hour to enhance economic growth have been proposed. So far, no high speed freight corridor has been proposed in peninsular India including Tamil Nadu which is a crying need of the region. On the other hand, an increasing portion of the costs which are traditionally met by the Government of India and the Railway Ministry are sought to be pushed on to the State Governments such as project costs on new lines and passenger safety amenities like foot overbridges. This is totally unacceptable.

The increase in freight charges at this time will fuel inflation as it will increase the cost of commodities, especially essential commodities, and important raw materials like food grains, cement, coal, iron ore, etc. It will further increase the pressure on State electricity utilities which are already suffering. There has been an indirect increase in passenger fares by increasing a number of supplementary charges. This is an attempt to hoodwink the public.

The Railway Ministry is also trying to appropriate the allocation towards MGNREGA for its needs, which is very unfair and encroaches on the decision making powers of local bodies and State Governments.

Further, no additional services have been announced in the Chennai Suburban System which is highly patronized by the public. The very few new railway lines and services announced for Tamil Nadu are really schemes demanded many years ago and based on repeated requests from the State Government. Unlike ongoing projects which have been greatly delayed, I hope at least these projects will be implemented in time.

On the whole, this Railway Budget continues the trend of step-motherly treatment habitually meted out to Tamil Nadu and is a major disappointment. The Railway budget has only paid lip service to the common people while placing untold burdens on them.

J JAYALALITHAA
Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

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