

Tamil Nadu Boycotted

Vanakkam! I was supposed to attend the 'NITI Aayog' meeting currently being held in Delhi, chaired by the Prime Minister. However, I am compelled to speak before you, in the people's forum, seeking justice due to the discriminatory attitude towards Tamil Nadu reflected in Union Budget 2024. You are all well aware of the progressive and visionary schemes of your Dravidian Model Government in Tamil Nadu, which have been implemented over the past three years! The benefits of our government schemes directly reach every family—every citizen! This is why the DMK is achieving continuous success! "New schemes everyday, people's heart filled with joy" This is the motto of our government! Yet, the Union Government continues to engage in actions that are contrary to our progressive thoughts.

I often say, "A good government is one that works not only for the people who voted in favour of us but also for those who did not." This is how the Tamil Nadu government functions! All the Union Governments before Modi-led BJP Government were like this. But that magnanimity is missing with Modi's BJP Government. They run the government with political motive. The budget presented on 23rd July is evidence of this! In the recently held parliamentary elections, the people of various states have defeated the anti-people BJP. The Budget presented by Union Finance Minister seems like a vengeful act against the States and people who boycotted the BJP. Instead of preparing a budget for the welfare of all Indians, she has prepared a budget to take revenge against those who voted for the INDIA bloc. This goes against the oath of office she took swearing allegiance to the Constitution! The Union BJP Government is disregarding Tamil Nadu continuously! The only special project they have announced for Tamil Nadu in all these years is AIIMS at Madurai. But you know very well what the situation is even after a decade!

I do not understand how they expect the people of Tamil Nadu to vote for the BJP without announcing any special schemes for the state! This is the third successive term for the BJP government! However, the people of India did not give a majority to that party this time! Without the support of a few regional parties, the BJP could not have formed the government! In such a situation, I thought that the BJP would realise the reason for their decline and expected a change of heart! But only disappointment prevails! Even two days before the budget, I made the needs of Tamil Nadu clear to the Union Government through social media. Nevertheless, the finance minister did not make any announcements on my demands! On top everything, not even the word 'Tamil Nadu' found a place in the budget! In the past, they at least used to recite a Thirukkural for namesake. It seems they got bitter with Thiruvalluvar also this time. In a way, I am relieved that there is no Thirukkural in this (discriminatory) budget. One thing I highly anticipated from this budget was the fund allocation for Chennai Metro Rail Project's second phase. It is a project for which Honourable Union Home Minister Amit Shah hastily laid the foundation stone in the midst of Covid pandemic in 2020. It was announced in the Union Budget of 2021 that the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Union Government will jointly implement this project at a cost of 63,000 crore rupees. But now, it is only the Tamil Nadu government that is accelerating and implementing this project! Without releasing even a single rupee from its own funds, the Union Government has been delaying for three years! If we raise questions, they respond in Parliament stating that this is a state-sponsored project. If so, would they give the railway sector to the state government? They refuse to open their mouth regarding the approval for Coimbatore, Madurai Metro Rail projects as well. But in the last three years, the same Union Government has approved

metro rail projects for many cities smaller than ours and provided substantial financial assistance. How is this fair?

Last year, Tamil Nadu was hit by two cyclones and met with severe natural calamities! We requested 37 thousand crore rupees as disaster relief funds. However, they released only 276 crore rupees (that too from SDRF), which should be provided annually, and disappointed us. We were hoping that they would announce flood relief funds at least in this year's budget. However, the Union Finance Minister has allocated over ten thousand crore rupees to states which are ruled by the NDA allies, on which the government relies on to remain standing.

To sum it up, in addition to not announcing any new projects for Tamil Nadu, this Union Government is deceitfully attempting to reduce funds for ongoing projects as well.

The worst of all is that, in order to paralyse the school education department of Tamil Nadu, they have even held up the funds - that should have been released as usual - for SSA that is being implemented over 20 years.

The Union BJP Government is adamant that they will release funds only after agreeing to implement the NEP. They do not have even an iota of concern, for the education of the students is being ruined, and the teachers who teach them are not paid. All that the BJP cares about is to impose their ideology and Hindi.

They have mentioned one more thing in the budget speech. The Union Finance Minister announces in the budget that the stamp duty levied by the states will be reduced, without consulting the states. They already brought the GST system and took the right of taxation powers away from the states. When they have not even disbursed the GST compensation of 20 thousand crore rupees to Tamil Nadu, who gave them the authority to alter the tax levying system of the states? The middle-class is suffering without any concession in income tax for the last ten years. The Union Government is patting their own back for announcing a meagre tax benefit of up to Rs 17,500 per year to individual taxpayers under the NTR (New Tax Regime) when majority can't avail that too.

This is not just a budget taking revenge on Tamil Nadu—it is a budget that takes revenge against entire India! This is a 'save the government budget' of BJP to remain in power! As the voice of the people of Tamil Nadu, in fact, as the voice of all the Indian people, let me say something: "You are committing mistake after mistake! You will suffer more and more defeats. Just as both houses of the Indian Parliament are in outrage, the hearts of the Indian people are also raging against you! THE BJP MUST ANSWER!

Issued By: - DIPR, Secretariat, Chennai – 9

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