

Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

It gives me great pleasure to address the first session of the newly constituted Twelfth Legislative Assembly of the State. I congratulate all the newly elected members of this august Assembly and wish them well in their services for the welfare of the people. I must place on record my sincere compliments to the people of Tamilnadu, who have kept up the healthy democratic traditions of the State by exercising their franchise in a free and fair manner.

2. The recent elections to the State Legislative Assembly have been historic in more than one sense. The decisive mandate given by the people of Tamilnadu to the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is most spectacular and without a parallel in the history of the State. These elections demonstrated the unshakeable faith of the people of Tamilnadu in the AIADMK and particularly its leader, the Honourable Chief Minister.

3. The elections to the Legislative Assembly witnessed the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the first time throughout the State. There were many cases of delay in commencement of polling due to malfunctioning of machines. Many developed countries like the United States of America and Japan have earlier experimented using EVMs but have now reverted back to the paper ballot. This Government opposes the use of EVMs and would take up this matter with the Election Commission of India. More than one crore eligible voters were prevented from exercising their franchise despite having valid photo-identity cards due to deletion of their names from the voter lists. This Government will also take up this issue with the Election Commission and arrange to rectify the anomalies before the ensuing polls to local bodies.

4. This Government is conscious of the fact that the state bureaucracy and police stand demoralized. This Government is committed to restoring the morale

and pride of the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Police Service and other services of the State.

5. This Government recognizes that maintenance of law and order is the *sine qua non* for social and economic development of the State. It shall be the endeavour of this Government to put down all extremist and secessionist elements and all forms of terrorism with a heavy hand. In the last five years, steps taken to nab Veerappan and his gang did not succeed and of late, militant, anti-national and secessionist groups like TNLA and TNRT have forged links with Veerappan. This Government will take all action to capture this notorious criminal with the cooperation of the Government of India and the Government of Karnataka. There has also been proliferation of extra-legal and extra-constitutional forces enjoying the patronage of the powers that were, who have been indulging in unlawful activities and intimidating law abiding citizens. This Government would put down such elements with an iron hand.

6. A great thrust was given to modernisation of the police force between 1991 and 1996. However, stagnation set in thereafter due to inadequate attention to this important subject. This Government will accord high priority to transforming the police force into a highly professional and competent law enforcement agency comparable to the best in the world.

7. This Government shall work for amiable Centre-State and inter-State relations based on goodwill and cooperation. State Governments are closer to the people than the Central Government. When decisions on major economic issues affecting the poor such as raising the issue prices of essential commodities supplied through the Public Distribution System are taken, prior consultation with State Governments will be in order. The Central Government will also be urged to take up large projects that would usher in economic development in the backward districts of Tamilnadu. It is hoped that the Central Government will take up implementation of the Sethu Samudram project early. In order to improve the shipping transport, the Central Government will also

be urged to provide funds for the development of the Chennai, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Tuticorin and Colachel harbours. This Government will urge the Government of Andhra Pradesh to take immediate steps to complete the “Krishna Water Scheme”. A dialogue will also be initiated with the Government of Kerala for raising the height of the Mullai Periyar Dam to 152 feet. This Government will also seek the co-operation of the Government of Karnataka in resolving the long pending Cauvery water dispute.

8. Members of this august Assembly are aware that Tamilnadu has been denied its due share in devolution of funds by successive Finance Commissions. This Government will urge the Government of India that it should not abdicate its vital role in augmenting the financial resources of progressive States.

9. Agriculture being the mainstay of the rural economy, special emphasis will be given towards popularizing modern irrigation systems, scientific water management methods and agricultural practices

for increasing production and productivity. A new State Agriculture Policy aimed at achieving optimal land use, reclamation of wastelands for agricultural purposes, improvement of soil health, development of dry land agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, pisciculture, post-harvest management, strengthening of research and extension etc. will be formulated. A comprehensive programme for training farmers and others in rainwater harvesting methods will be implemented to deal with the near-perpetual scarcity of water for irrigation purposes.

10. The concept of Uzhavar Sandhai has proved to be a failure because the intended benefits are neither reaching the farmers nor the consumers. This Government proposes to close down the non-functional Uzhavar Sandhais and take steps to give an impetus to the local fairs functioning in Tamilnadu for ages through a "Village Fairs Development Scheme" and develop them as agricultural produce marketing centres.

11. Livestock plays an important role in influencing the rural household income.

This Government proposes to implement a plan based on recommendations of experts for improving the population mix of our milch cattle. A special plan will be prepared for encouraging farmers to run hybrid sheep farms, aquaculture farms and poultry units as additional avocations for generating supplementary income.

12. This Government will strive to meet the increasing demand for housing in the State. “A house for each family” is an important aim of the Government and to achieve this objective, an “Expeditious House-site Allotment Scheme” will be formulated.

13. Tamilnadu is reeling under severe heat wave conditions and water scarcity is posing insurmountable problems for the people. This Government will take urgent measures to ensure that long-term and sustained supply of water is made available for irrigation and domestic consumption to the people of the State. This will be done by:

- Implementing a time-bound scheme for providing at least one drinking water source in

every habitation with a population of 100 and above.

- Government of Andhra Pradesh will be urged to complete the remaining portion of the Srisailem – Somasila canal of the Krishna water project immediately. Steps will also be taken to construct two new water-storage reservoirs for meeting the requirements of people of the metropolis.
- The new Veeranam Project will be implemented with assistance from international and national financial institutions after reworking the estimates.
- A special project will be prepared for modernizing and improving the water-holding capacity of all lakes, irrigation channels etc through active participation of users.
- The Central Government will be urged to nationalize all the rivers in the country and take

up phased implementation of the "Peninsular River Water Grid Scheme" connecting major rivers in Central and South India.

14. The institutions of local self-government in Tamilnadu have witnessed a steady degeneration in terms of finances and management. This Government proposes to hold elections to all local bodies at the earliest. It shall strive for improving financial resources of the local bodies without any discrimination. This will enable them to develop sustainable rural and urban civic infrastructure. The Central Government would be urged to take constitutional action to provide for a two-tier system of local administration and also facilitate direct election of chairpersons of Panchayat Unions.

15. This Government has taken action to dissolve all primary cooperative societies as they have already completed their term. Instances of malpractices in cooperative societies will be thoroughly investigated and those involved in corrupt practices brought to book. This Government will seek to infuse real democratic

spirit in the cooperative institutions of the State through elections to be conducted in September 2001.

16. The State Government has been incurring a huge food subsidy bill for the public distribution system which is plagued with corruption and other malpractices. This Government will accord high priority to revamping and restructuring the public distribution system for making it beneficiary-oriented and devoid of leakages. Smuggling of PDS commodities will be put down with an iron hand. Defects noticed in distribution of family cards will be rectified. This Government will strive to ensure that the quality and supply of all essential commodities are maintained. The Civil Supplies Corporation and cooperative institutions engaged in distribution of essential commodities will be computerized enabling e-governance in procurement, marketing and financial management.

17. This Government will take steps to ensure that Tamilnadu becomes the most industrialized State

in the country. An expert committee will be constituted to undertake a study for setting up new industries. A new industrial policy with the aim of attracting investments and generating employment will be formulated. Steps will be taken to promote a "Tamil N.R.I Consortium" comprising Tamils living all over the world, for promoting foreign investments and technology transfers to the State.

18. Adequate infrastructure is an important pre-requisite for sustaining the pace of industrialization. This Government will urge the Central Government for providing more funds for the maintenance of national highways. The State Government will also explore the possibilities of funding upgradation and maintenance of state highways, rural roads and bridges through international agencies. Similarly, the state of the transport sector will be reviewed with a view to providing affordable and better facilities for movement of people and goods.

19. This Government recognizes the imperative of spearheading an IT-revolution for increasing employment opportunities, enhancing the earning capacity of the people and transforming governance in the State. Steps will be taken for improving the IT networking infrastructure by employing fibre-optic technology. This Government envisions an important role to be played by private entrepreneurs in linking the rural and urban areas through the Internet. Satellite Earth Stations will be set up in different districts for providing access to export markets to entrepreneurs engaged in computer software production.

20. The Small Industries sector in Tamilnadu is in a pitiable state. This Government will restore the patronage given to Small-Scale Industries by withdrawing the Government Order No.75, Finance Department, dated 19-2-1997 that had done away with the special preference given to them in Government procurements. A 1000-acre Small Scale Industrial Estate at Thirumullaivayal and a Women's

Industrial Estate at a suitable place will be established in right earnest. Immediate action will be taken to revive the construction industry and real estate business, which had been a source of employment for lakhs of people. The Central Government will be urged to take effective action to prevent unfair trade practices in the cement industry and to put in place a regulatory mechanism to tackle price fluctuations of cement.

21. Availability of adequate and uninterrupted power is the key to economic and industrial growth. During its tenure in 1991-96, this Government had increased the power generation capacity of the State by 968 MW. However during the last five years, only 458 MW has been added. Those thermal power projects that were conceived during 1991-96 and abandoned by the previous Government will be taken up for reconsideration in the context of overall power requirement of the State. 'Energy Audit System' and 'Energy Budget System' at the levels of generation, transmission and distribution will be introduced. Special attention will be paid to

augmenting the non-conventional sources of energy such as windmill and solar energy, power generation through industrial alcohol, molasses, municipal wastes etc.

22. "Health for All" and easy access to quality medical facilities will be among the cherished goals of this Government. Besides taking steps to augment the existing hospital and domiciliary infrastructure, facilities for enabling state-of-the-art and quality treatment will be provided. Availability of medicines in hospitals will be ensured. All district, municipal and taluk hospitals will be provided with generators.

23. This Government will strive to provide quality education to all children below the age of 14 years. Non-enrolled and drop-out children will be identified during the current year and a massive movement will be organised to bring all of them to school with a special focus on girls belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Denotified Tribes, Most Backward Classes and

Backward Classes. In order to make the classroom conducive and attractive for children, an appropriate educational methodology of teaching which will promote self-learning will be evolved and all the primary school teachers will be trained within a period of three years. It is proposed to allow parents of children to play a major role in construction, maintenance and running of schools through Empowered Peoples' Committees. The student-teacher ratio in schools will be rationalized and efforts made to provide one teacher for every class. All High schools in rural areas will be upgraded into Higher Secondary schools in a phased manner. Reservation for rural students in technical institutions and professional colleges will be enhanced from 15 percent to 25 percent. This Government will also provide a free bicycle to all girl students belonging to the Adi-Dravidar and the Scheduled Tribe communities studying in classes eleven and twelve. A scheme for providing free education upto post graduate level in Government colleges for Adi-Dravidar and Scheduled Tribe girl students will be implemented. All engineering colleges in Tamilnadu will be affiliated to a Technology

University proposed to be set up. Transparent and clear transfer guidelines will be evolved for the benefit of the teaching community. For our academic institutions to become centres of excellence facilitating all round development of our children, it is necessary that the schools, colleges and universities have adequate resources. This Government will explore the possibilities of internal generation of resources for improving educational infrastructure.

24. Women, children, disabled and the aged constitute the most vulnerable sections of our society. The problems of these sections will merit special attention of the Government. Measures will be undertaken to enact a law enabling 33 percent reservation for women in employment opportunities and in Parliament and State Legislatures. Development councils for upliftment of economically weaker women will be constituted in villages for mobilizing credit facilities and enabling financial empowerment. A massive scheme for training five lakh women in entrepreneurial skills for self-employment will be

launched. The number of All Women Police Stations will be increased in order to instill a sense of security amongst women. This Government will come down heavily on illicit liquor trafficking, which contributes to the miseries of poor households, and particularly women.

25. The last five years have witnessed a steady degeneration of nutritious noon-meal centres. The Puratchi Thalaivar M.G.R Nutritious Meal Programme will be reorganised and restructured to ensure proper targeting and to improve the quality of service. The “Cradle Baby Scheme” and other schemes for child welfare launched during 1991-1996 will be revived. This Government will encourage setting up of old age homes by non-government organisations to enable our elders to live in dignity and comfort. Laws providing special facilities like ramps, special toilets etc in public places for the disabled will be strictly enforced.

26. Thanthai Periyar, Perarignar Anna and Puratchi Thalaivar M.G.R. cherished the cause

and ideology of uplifting the Adi-Dravidars, Tribals, Backward and Most Backward classes in education, employment and economic status in order to establish an egalitarian society. The Honourable Chief Minister, Selvi J.Jayalalithaa in her last tenure had enacted the historic legislation providing 69 percent reservation in education and employment for the depressed sections of the society and enabled its inclusion in the IX schedule of the Constitution. Though the Supreme Court has not yet taken cognisance of this historic legislation, the Central Government will be urged to bring in a constitutional amendment to protect the statute. The Central Government will also be moved for increasing reservation for Backward Communities from 27 percent to 50 percent and for implementing the same in recruitment to the All India Services and the Central Services. This Government will revitalize the TAHDCO for extension of liberal credit facilities.

27. This Government is committed to the protection and welfare of the minorities. Inter-religious Harmony Committees comprising religious elders and

youth from all sections will be set up to promote communal amity.

28. This Government recognizes the imperative of having a targeted and effective social security net for the people living below the poverty line. Training in multiple trades will be provided to workers deprived of their jobs so as to enable early rehabilitation. Speedy action will be taken to re-examine and codify the labour laws. Special attention will be paid to problems of the unorganized sector labourers so as to ensure fair wages and dignified working conditions.

29. This Government is concerned about the welfare of the fisherfolk of Tamilnadu. Emphasis will be placed on providing IT-based modern communication facilities so that meteorological information, information on fish density in areas etc. are easily available to fishermen. This Government will also urge the Central Government to redeem the Kacha Theevu island and restore the fishing rights of our people.

30. The handloom industry in Tamilnadu is in a bad shape and the Government will examine the causes of sickness in spinning mills and take appropriate remedial measures.

31. This Government proposes to give a fillip to the tourism industry in the State. A comprehensive tourism development plan will be prepared aimed at increasing opportunities for employment, development of local handicrafts and increasing revenues to the State.

32. An independent and autonomous judiciary is the cornerstone of our democratic polity. Suitable action for speedy disposal of pending cases will be taken after identifying the administrative and other needs of the judiciary in consultation with the Honourable Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

33. Temples in Tamilnadu reflect the ancient culture, civilization, art and life style of the people. This Government proposes to take effective steps to ensure proper administration of temples.

34. This Government will implement the two-language policy of Tamil and English formulated and implemented by Perarignar Anna. Action will be taken to increase the use of Tamil in administration. Steps will be taken to protect and develop the artistic ethos of Tamilnadu.

35. Government employees constitute the bedrock of any administrative set up. This Government will be sympathetic to the genuine grievances of its employees and take steps to examine issues relating to their welfare and conditions of service. To facilitate this, a scheme will be implemented to enable the representatives of Government employees, teachers and employees in other sectors to meet the Heads of Departments in districts and at State level to periodically represent and find solutions to their problems. Action will be taken to improve avenues for training, sensitization and the working environment of employees so as to usher in an era of quality governance.

36. The Media play an important role in linking Government and people. This Government will be alive to the problems faced by media persons and take necessary steps for their welfare.

37. Sales tax administration will be streamlined so that traders are not subjected to harassment. The possibility of providing assistance and help to indigent traders will be explored.

38. This Government pledges to adopt all means necessary to provide a transparent, clean and efficient administration in the State. The concept of "file closing week" will be implemented to ensure expeditious clearing of files within 90 days. E-governance will be employed to facilitate citizen-government interface.

39. Honourable members of this august Assembly are well aware that the people of this State have a lot of expectations from this Government. But the new Government has assumed charge at a time when the State is in a severe financial crisis. When this

Government demitted office in 1996, it left behind a healthy state of economy with a large cash surplus of Rs.874 crores. However, over the last five years, not only have these reserves been depleted completely, but there were unpaid cash liabilities of about Rs.700 crores as on 31st March 2001. The State Government is now forced to depend on borrowings from the Reserve Bank of India even to meet its day-to-day cash requirements. There has also been an uncontrolled growth in revenue deficit in the last five years. This Government proposes to place in this House a “White Paper on the State of Finances of Tamilnadu” for public knowledge. The expectations of the people can only be fulfilled when the State is financially healthy. It is proposed to undertake a fiscal course-correction exercise to bring the State finances back on the rails. This will take time to have an impact and I am sure that the people of Tamilnadu will support the measures to be taken by this Government for restoring the financial health of the State.

40. This Government would like to give a firm assurance to the people of Tamilnadu that all efforts will be taken to eradicate poverty and want. Conditions will be created for total elimination of poverty. Firm steps will be taken to fulfill this pledge in its entirety by ensuring the economic development of the State with iron will and determination.

41. I have briefly touched upon some of the policy issues, which indicate the general direction and vision of this Government. I am confident that through vigorous implementation of policies, we shall be able to transform Tamilnadu into the most dynamic and prosperous State in the country. I trust that the debate that will follow will enhance the vision of this Government for ensuring the prosperity of the people.

42. I convey my best wishes for achieving the challenging tasks ahead.

Vanakkam

Jai Hind