

Hon'ble Members of the Legislative Assembly,

Vanakkam

It gives me immense pleasure to address you during the first session of the newly elected Thirteenth Legislative Assembly. I compliment and welcome all of you elected by the people of Tamil Nadu as Members of this august House which is the symbol of Democracy.

2. Politics is an integral part of every activity of the human society, like the invisible omnipresence of air, one of the Pancha Boothas comprising of water, fire, earth, sky and air which are essential for the living organisms and the world around. Although the style of politics can be democratic or dictatorial, similar to air, which can either be pure or impure, our nation has gloriously preserved its democratic polity instead of merely shunning the very term politics. In particular, the Uthiramerur stone edicts are a historical proof that

the Tamils, through the Kudavolai system, followed the democratic principle of the rule of the people, even during the times of the Chola Kings. From the fact that guidelines had been prescribed even then as inscribed in those edicts that the elected Heads and Members of the local bodies are to be persons of integrity and probity and that only such qualified people could contest for public offices and serve in public life, the need for a much more exacting code of conduct for the democratic polity of our nation which had fully moved from the rule of kings to the rule of the people is self evident. With the trust that the Hon'ble Members have the maturity to fully adhere to this code of conduct and the hope that they would act accordingly, I present before you the vision document of the policies and programmes of this Government in the coming years.

3. Our ultimate goal is to achieve autonomy for the States and Federalism at the Centre through Constitutional means. For a

State Government to perform effectively in ensuring the welfare of the people, it is imperative that a cordial relationship exists between the Union and the State Governments. Arignar Anna, while assuming office had observed that a confrontationist attitude towards the Union Government should be avoided. This Government, following his footsteps, extending a hand of co-operation to the Union Government and at the same time voicing its rights, will adopt an approach which is beneficial to the State and will truthfully endeavour to secure its rights and obtain all necessary assistance.

4. It is vital that law and order is properly maintained for ensuring the overall development of the State and peaceful life. This Government will vigilantly maintain law and order to make Tamil Nadu a haven of peace. Also, this Government will provide an administration ensuring

equity and equal justice to all sections of the society.

5. The economic growth rate of Tamil Nadu has been less than the national average. This Government is determined to reverse this trend and usher in an era of rapid growth.

6. The Union Government had released an advance assistance of Rs.1000 crores, a scale of relief which has not been provided to any other flood affected State, in order to provide immediate relief to the people severely affected by the floods that ravaged the State last year. This Government will execute permanent restoration of the damaged infrastructure like riverbanks, tanks and roads with the financial assistance from NABARD.

7. Due to the enormous misery caused by recurrent droughts and floods, the very future of the farmers of Tamil Nadu had become bleak and a

question mark. The farmers of the State were groping in the dark without a sense of direction and purpose. Their debt burden hung like a sword over their heads. With a view to liberating the farmers from this great distress, this Government, as promised in the election manifesto, has completely waived the entire debt burden of farmers to the tune of Rs.7000 crores from the co-operative banks on the very day of this Government being sworn in and thereby has lit a light in the lives of farmers.

8. The Budget Speech of the previous Government in 2001-2002 had stated that there are 20 lakh hectares, that is, 50 lakh acres of wastelands in Tamil Nadu. As stated in the DMK election manifesto, expeditious action will be taken to reclaim these wastelands and distribute to landless farmers two acres each.

9. Steps will be taken to revive the "Uzhavar Sandhai" scheme, which benefited both

the cultivators and the consumers with all the facilities which were previously available.

10. The scheme of free power supply to all farmers for agricultural operations implemented by the DMK Government in 1990, which had faced some obstacles in the past and is presently in vogue, will be continued.

11. In a situation where the talks for sharing of the waters of river Cauvery, commencing from 1968 when the present Chief Minister was the Minister for Public Works in the Council of Ministers headed by Arignar Anna, in which many Chief Ministers who assumed office in the States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Pondicherry have taken part in the presence of Union Ministers, have not come to a conclusion till now, the final award of the Cauvery Tribunal is expected this year after a wait of 38 years with the expectation that the award will be just and the day for its implementation would dawn very soon. In the meantime, this

Government urges the Union Government to fully implement the interim award of the Tribunal. Necessary measures will be taken to implement the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court permitting the increase in the height of Mullai Periyar Dam. This Government will take necessary steps to prevent the attempts to construct a dam across the Palar river in Andhra Pradesh, which will have serious adverse impact on the farmers in the northern districts of the State.

12. This Government in its previous regime during 1996-2001 had successfully implemented the World Bank assisted Water Resources Consolidation Project earning all round appreciation. As a follow on project, this Government will impress upon the World Bank to accord early approval and provide necessary financial assistance for implementation of the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water Resource Management (IAMWARM) Project.

13. As the Peninsular Rivers Link Project is the only permanent solution for the water deficit State like Tamil Nadu, this Government will urge the Union Government for expeditious implementation of this project.

14. The clarion call given by the former Union Minister for Commerce, late Murasoli Maran during the Doha Round of Negotiations of the World Trade Organisation ensured that the interests of Indian farmers were protected. This Government, while recalling his historic contribution at this juncture, urges the Union Government to ensure that the agricultural sector is not adversely affected by any Agreement that may be entered into under the World Trade Organization regime in future.

15. The Welfare Boards for the workers employed in the unorganized sector will be rejuvenated. The Palm Workers Welfare Board will be revived and the demands of those employed in

Palm based vocations will be considered and necessary measures taken.

16. The provision of quality rice at an affordable price and ensuring food security to the people has always been a priority of this Government. With a view to implementing this objective, as stated in the election manifesto, it has been ordered that all families with rice cards will be provided quality rice at a price of Rs.2/- per kilogram under the Public Distribution System with effect from 3rd June, 2006.

17. This Government will take necessary action to provide Kerosene to the new family card holders also by obtaining additional allocation from the Union Government.

18. The Union Government under the able leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Thiru Manmohan Singh with the valuable guidance of Thirumathi Sonia Gandhi and the constructive

support of the Hon'ble Union Minister Thiru Arjun Singh has recognized and conferred the status of Classical Language to Tamil, thus realising the longstanding dream of Tamils. This Government would urge the Union Government to institute classical language awards in the name of Tholkappiar and Thiruvalluvar. Also, this Government will continue to impress upon the Union Government to implement the longstanding demand of making Tamil as one of the official languages of the Union. The ferry services to visit the statue of Saint Thiruvalluvar at Kanyakumari will be modernized. In addition, this Government will urge the Union Government to declare Thirukkural as a National Book. The works have commenced for reinstalling the statue of Kannagi, the cultural symbol of Tamils, on the evening of the 3rd June at the same site on the Beach road from where it was removed.

19. Overcoming all obstacles, this Government is determined to take early action in consultation with educationists to ensure that all students studying in schools in Tamil Nadu will compulsorily learn Tamil as one of the subjects from the ensuing academic year.

20. This Government has ordered that 15th July, the birth anniversary of the great leader Kamarajar, shall be celebrated as Educational Development Day in all schools and that egg will be provided twice a week (on Monday and Wednesday) along with nutritious meal from that day.

21. As promised in the DMK election manifesto, with a view to improving the quality of education, the teachers now employed under contract on consolidated pay in Government schools will be given time scale of pay hereafter. All vacant teaching posts in Government schools and Colleges will be filled up on regular time scale

of pay. All Government schools will be provided with computers in a phased manner in the next three years.

22. The confusion that is prevailing now in the admissions to professional courses will be cleared and the admission procedure streamlined.

23. The Common Entrance Examination for admission to professional courses has become highly expensive and a source of unnecessary hardship for the students. With a view to ensuring a level playing field to students from rural areas and poor families and those from urban areas, this Government will constitute a Committee of educational experts to recommend suitable measures for abolition of Common Entrance Examination from the academic year 2007-2008.

24. The present self supporting courses in Government Colleges, which can be availed only by

the affluent students, will be converted into regular courses and the fees will be fixed accordingly.

25. The fees to the Engineering and Medical courses in Government Colleges which were increased manifold by the previous Government, will be reduced.

26. In pursuance of the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Act, this Government will bring necessary legislation specifically providing for mandatory reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and other Denotified Communities in unaided non-minority self financing educational institutions.

27. A resolution to convey wholehearted support to the endeavour of the Union Government to introduce reservation for Other Backward Classes in higher educational institutions like I.I.Ts and I.I.Ms under the control of the Union

Government will be moved during the current session of this House.

28. This Government will continue the scheme of providing free bicycles to +2 students, implemented by the previous Government with the Central assistance of Rs.20 crores during 2001-2002 and Rs.6 crores during 2002-2003 and continued further from the State funds.

29. During the previous regime, The Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act was brought into force and due to the strong demand that it should be withdrawn, an Ordinance was promulgated on 18.5.2004 repealing this Act. Since the Ordinance was not replaced by a Bill before the Legislature, the above Act for ban on conversions still stands unrepealed. In accordance with the stand taken recently by the Government of India that India is firm in ensuring the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of religion as provided in the

Constitution, this Government will introduce a Bill in the current session of the Legislative Assembly to repeal the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act brought by the previous Government.

30. The egalitarian decision of this Government to issue orders providing for qualified and trained persons from all communities to be appointed as Archakas in Hindu temples, thus removing a thorn in the heart of Periyar, has been welcomed by all. Necessary training for this purpose will commence soon.

31. This Government will press the Union Government to bring an Act for the entire Country, identical to the Act legalizing self respect marriages in Tamil Nadu enacted during the Chief Ministership of Arignar Anna.

32. This Government will be easily accessible to investors, and function as their ally,

providing all required facilities to them for establishing industries. In order to encourage the small scale sector which has tremendous employment generation potential the scheme of providing capital subsidy assistance to small scale industries established in industrially backward areas of the State will be revived by this Government.

33. Considering the growth and multiple dimensions of the Information Technology Sector, this Government will frame a new policy to encourage this sector to increase software production and exports and employment generation.

34. All vacancies in the Government hospitals will be filled up immediately on regular time scale of pay. The 'Varumun Kappom' Scheme of special medical camps conducted by specialist doctors in the villages will be implemented again.

35. This Government is determined to eradicate the abhorrent practice of manual scavenging in any form. Alternative vocations through self employment will be provided to these workers and their dependents.

36. This Government will accord high priority for the good upkeep of the road network in the State. While ensuring adequate maintenance, this Government will make the required investment in widening and upgrading the high-density road corridors in the State.

37. This Government will focus on upgrading the infrastructural facilities in rural areas. Main streets in villages will be paved with concrete roads in a phased manner. This Government will endeavour to provide link roads to all rural habitations with a population of 500 or above. Sodium vapour lamps will be fitted at central locations in villages where people normally gather.

38. A comprehensive infrastructure development plan for Chennai Metropolitan area will be implemented to fulfill the growing infrastructural needs of the City. As a part of this plan, satellite towns will be established near Chennai. Similar satellite towns will be established near other Municipal Corporation areas. The Perambur flyover project started by this Government, which had come to a standstill, will be expeditiously completed. With a view to managing the fast growing traffic in Chennai City, the Metro Rail Project, will be implemented on the lines of similar projects in Delhi and Kolkata. This Government will urge the Union Government to take expeditious action for the expansion plan of Chennai Airport having regard to the ever increasing air passenger traffic.

39. The seawater desalination plant for Chennai City will be established with the assistance already announced by the United Progressive

Alliance Government at the Centre. In addition, underground sewerage schemes will be implemented in all municipal areas of the State in a phased manner.

40. This Government will ensure supply of electricity without power cuts throughout the State. As the demand for power has been increasing day by day, additional power generation units will be established in the North Chennai and Mettur thermal power plants of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board.

41. The priority always accorded by this Government for the efficient functioning of the public transport system used everyday by the common man will continue. The Mini Bus scheme, introduced during the previous tenure of this Government and widely welcomed by the people, will be revived.

42. This Government has always been concerned about the welfare of workers who are the backbone of the nation and will function as the guardian of the rights of the working class and their legal entitlements.

43. The schemes for the welfare of traders will be revived, removing the slackness that has crept in the functioning of the Traders Welfare Board established for the welfare of traders.

44. This Government has always cared for the welfare of the Government employees and teachers. This Government, fully realizing the importance of the role of the Government employees in delivering the schemes of the Government to the people, will continue to safeguard their interests. The interests of teachers, the architects of the future society, will be duly protected. The Tamil Nadu Essential Services Maintenance Act (TESMA), which is against the interests of the Government employees will be

repealed. Immediate steps will be taken to fill up the existing vacancies in various departments of the Government. The upper age limit for entering into Government service will be relaxed by five years, to enable the unemployed youth affected by the ban order on recruitment, to apply for Government jobs.

45. Necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the concessions available to the Adi Dravidars are extended to Adi Dravidars who follow other religions.

46. Necessary Legislation for providing reservation for Christian and Muslim religious minorities in all educational institutions and employment opportunities will be introduced.

47. A Tourism Master Plan for the entire State will be formulated to improve the infrastructural facilities required by the rapidly growing tourist traffic to this State and to fully

realise the employment generation potential of this sector.

48. A statue, in memory of the versatile actor late Sivaji Ganesan will be unveiled opposite to the office of the Director General of Police at Kamarajar Salai on his death anniversary on the coming 21st of July.

49. As a recreational means for women and enabling them to acquire general knowledge, the scheme of distribution of free colour television sets will be launched this year on the eve of the triple celebrations marking the birth anniversaries of Arignar Anna and Thanthai Periyar and implemented in a phased manner.

50. This Government is determined to improve the quality of life of the weavers and increase the exports of yarn, cloth and garments from Tamil Nadu so that Tamil Nadu takes full

advantage of the recent changes in the world textile trade.

51. The elections to the Co-operative institutions, will be conducted enabling them to function democratically. The State Government will reiterate its request to the Union Government to bring necessary legislative changes to remove the defects in the present three tier structure of rural local bodies.

52. This Government of the people of Tamil Nadu desires that the problem of Sri Lankan Tamils, which has been causing concern and has attracted the attention of the Tamils worldwide, should be resolved early through a process of peaceful dialogue.

53. Necessary measures will be undertaken to safeguard the traditional fishing rights of fishermen of Tamil Nadu to undertake fishing activities near Kachcha Theevu and to

remove the difficulties faced by them. Fishing harbours and cold storage facilities needed by the fishermen will be established.

54. The longstanding dream of the people of Tamil Nadu, the Sethusamudram Canal Project is being implemented by the United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre at a cost of Rs.2427 crores. This Government will render all co-operation to the Union Government to complete this scheme devoid of any obstacle within the targeted date.

55. The Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Memorial Marriage Assistance scheme which provided marriage assistance for poor girls will be revived, as promised in DMK election manifesto. The financial assistance provided under this scheme will be enhanced from Rs.10,000/- to Rs.15,000/-.

56. The DMK Government had pioneered the formation of Women Self Help Groups in 1989 and has always acted as a catalyst for their effective functioning. This Government will make all-out efforts to nurture and strengthen the Self Help Group Movement which has spread all over the State. Necessary measures will be taken to revive the 'Poomaalai' Scheme, started by the DMK Government to provide marketing avenues for the products produced by the Self Help Groups. A scheme of Self Help Groups for unemployed youth will be started soon, on the lines of Women Self Help Groups.

57. This Government will undertake necessary action for enacting the necessary Constitutional amendment to revive the Legislative Council.

58. This Government is happy to announce that water for irrigation will be released from the Mettur Reservoir on the 12th of June,

bringing joy to the farmers of Cauvery Delta as the water storage in the Mettur Reservoir is comfortable this year and prospects for a normal monsoon are bright. We have taken immediate action for expeditious desilting of rivers and channels to facilitate irrigation.

59. In an act never witnessed in Tamil Nadu, the Hon'ble Chief Minister Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi signed three files in the presence of thousands of people in the same auditorium where the new Council of Ministers was sworn in to mark the commencement of the implementation of the election promises. This novel deed, signifying a new chapter in the annals of democracy, will be etched in our memories forever.

60. I have the firm belief that Hon'ble Members of this august House will use this opportunity to serve Tamil Nadu and its people, adding to the strength of democracy in this State and alleviate the problems of people. I do not have

even an iota of doubt that the Hon'ble Members would enlighten this House of high repute with their contribution and would definitely follow the great traditions of this House. I conclude this address with the assurance that this Government, which has assumed office with the vow of doing what has been promised and promising only what could be done, will fulfill its promises in the ensuing Budget and thereafter in a phased manner and will provide an effective and caring governance to the people and nurture the growth of the State across all sectors while ensuring that the fruits of this growth reach all sections of the society.

Vanakkam

Jai Hind