

Governor's Address in the Legislative Assembly on 27th January 2007

Hon'ble Members of the Legislative Assembly,

Vanakkam. I convey my hearty New Year greetings to all of you at the commencement of the fourth session of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly and begin this address with the hope that during 2007, the standard of living of our people will improve as the State's economy marches ahead thanks to this Government's exemplary schemes.

2. You are all aware that the promise of this Government, "We will do what we say, we will say what we do," has been fulfilled within eight months after assumption of office, by ensuring that the DMK's election manifesto, which had incorporated all the expectations of the people of Tamil Nadu has been translated into this Government's first Budget.

3. After a long gap, this Government held the first elections to the Local Bodies during 1996 and also provided 33% reservation for women in these Bodies. This Government's record of restoring the rights, denied to Adi Dravidars in Pappapatti, Keeripatti, Nattarmangalam and Kottakatchiyendal Village Panchayats during that election as well as the subsequent election in 2001, during the recent elections in 2006, thus paving the way for all communities to march forward harmoniously in the path of development, deserves to be engraved in gold in the annals of democracy. This is not only a victory for democracy but also a victory for the voice given by all political parties in the struggle for social justice.

4. This Government, holding Arignar Anna's principle of State autonomy close to its heart, while voicing its demand for rights and at the same time extending a hand of friendship, shall endeavour to secure the due rights and benefits for our State from the Union Government.

5. Even 40 years back, Arignar Anna, in his maiden speech in Rajya Sabha had observed, "Stalwarts of this country sat and devised our Constitution. But the time has come for rethinking, reappraisal and revaluation". Leaders of several political parties and eminent jurists have since been emphasizing the need for

rewriting the Constitution of India. It is true that our Constitution was framed by great men of letters who created history like Dr. Ambedkar, in the context of our country having secured independence from foreign yoke as a result of freedom struggle. However, about 100 amendments have since been made so far, to take care of the emerging unavoidable needs. In the evolution of mankind, change is inevitable. In several countries, the Constitutions have been rewritten many a time. In the last 50 years, our nation's political, social and economic facets and the needs of the working class have radically changed. Today, people belonging to the Backward, Most Backward, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been forced to do tight rope walking to defend their hard won rights and to ensure due social justice, including minorities and gender rights. The need for transfer of more powers to States by reviewing the division of powers between the States and the Union, to ensure that true and wholesome federalism prevails and the wheels of social justice revolve without any hindrance, is increasing day by day. Hence, this Government urges the Union Government that the Constitution of India should be rewritten afresh, having regard to the changing needs, while preserving the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

6. In our constitutional framework, although the responsibility of delivering basic services to the people rests with the States, the powers of taxation are mostly with the Union. We are all aware of the increasing contribution of the service sector in the nation's economy and the rapid growth in revenue from service tax being presently levied by the Union Government. During the recent National Development Council Meeting, the Hon'ble Chief Minister Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi had given a call that the power to levy service tax should be with the States, given the fact that the huge responsibility of providing the services to the people lies with the State Governments which are closer to the people. This Government urges the Union Government to bring forward necessary constitutional amendment in this regard.

7. This Government had entered into a dialogue with the Government of Kerala on the Mullai Periyar issue, in line with our policy to maintain cordial relationship with the neighbouring States and as per the advice of Hon'ble Supreme Court. However, there has been no headway in the talks. Therefore, this Government has been forced into a situation, where there is no option but to approach the Hon'ble Supreme Court. This Government has taken all necessary steps to protect

the interests of the farmers of the Southern districts, in this critical issue vital for their livelihood.

8. The farmers of Tamil Nadu have been waiting for the last 16 years expecting the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, which was constituted during the Prime Ministership of Thiru V.P.Singh, the champion of social justice, accepting the request of Tamil Nadu. This final award is expected to be delivered on the coming 5th February. We hope that this award would render justice and provide livelihood to the farmers of this State.

9. The 11th Five Year Plan is to commence from April 2007. During the discussions held on 9.12.2006 in the National Development Council, on the approach towards the 11th Five Year Plan, it has been decided to implement this plan with the objective of inclusive growth enhancing the quality of life of all sections of the society.

10. The Ninth Five Year plan outlay of Rs.25,000 crores was increased by 60%, to fix the outlay of the Tenth Five Year Plan at Rs.40,000 crores. Increasing the outlay of Tenth Plan by 100%, this Government will strive to implement the Eleventh Five Year Plan with an outlay of Rs.80,000 crores. The objective of this Government would be to achieve an average annual growth rate of 9% in the State's economy during this plan period.

11. After this Government assumed office, crimes and law and order problems have significantly come down, as per comparative data. With a view to strengthening the Police Department, we have constituted the Third State Police Commission on the same lines as the previous two Police Commissions constituted by us. While any force trying to disrupt the law and order in the State will be firmly dealt with, necessary steps will be taken so that the police will function in a professional and people friendly manner.

12. After lending a helping hand to the farmers affected by a series of natural calamities by waiving the Co-operative loans to the tune of Rs.7000 crores availed by them, we are taking all measures to remove the stagnation that has set in the agricultural sector. It is a matter of great satisfaction that as a result of our efforts, only during the year 2006, for the first time in the recent years Kuruvai and a record Samba crops have been raised.

13. Having regard to the fact that 56% of the population is dependant on the agricultural sector, we will aim to achieve a minimum of 4% growth in agriculture. We will take appropriate steps to ensure that the youth from families dependant on agriculture are also enabled to reap the benefits of the present boom witnessed in the industrial and service sectors.

14. With a view to ensuring sustainable growth in agriculture and providing regular employment opportunities to the rural poor, it is necessary that the water resources, indispensable for agriculture, are augmented. In our country, we witness an anomalous situation where one region faces severe drought and another region suffers immense damage due to floods. At the same time, enormous quantity of water flows into the sea every year benefiting none, with only a small quantity being used for agriculture. It is in this context that, in the recent meeting of the National Development Council on 9.12.2006, the Hon'ble Chief Minister had called for the speedy implementation of the project for inter-linking of rivers, which is the need of the hour for water deficit states like Tamil Nadu. This Government will continue to urge the Union Government to implement this scheme expeditiously and make necessary allocation in the 11th Five Year Plan.

15. The negotiations for financial assistance of the World Bank for the Modernisation of Irrigated Agriculture and Management of Water resources have concluded in December, 2006. The approval for this project by the World Bank is expected shortly. This project, which will be executed from 2007-2008, will benefit six lakh hectares of agricultural land through improvements in irrigation facilities. This multi-purpose project will be implemented with the objective of increasing the income of farmers through the co-ordinated action of the Public Works, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Departments.

16. Only an increase in the income of farmers can bring about an improvement in the quality of their lives. Towards this objective, the Government will implement schemes to increase the income of farmers by encouraging cultivation of more remunerative horticultural crops and allied activities like animal husbandry and pisci-culture. Thrust will be given to micro-irrigation techniques to promote the judicious use of water.

17. During the first two stages of the Scheme of wasteland reclamation and free distribution to the landless agricultural families, 50,000 acres of land have been reclaimed and distributed to the poor agricultural families. This scheme, a harbinger of a silent revolution in the socio-economic life of landless poor farmers, will continue to be implemented.

18. The previous DMK Government had announced and implemented a revolutionary scheme in the year 2000 for grant of house site pattas to poor people who were residing for more than ten years in houses constructed in Government poramboke lands. About two lakh house site pattas were given under this scheme up to 31.3.2001. After considering the requests to revive this scheme which has not been effectively implemented thereafter and issue pattas to the eligible people, this Government has decided to issue house site pattas within a period of six months from January 2007, to those who are residing in houses constructed in poramboke lands for more than ten years.

19. In the year 2000, this Government had formed the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labour Welfare Board and launched the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labourers Social Security and Welfare Scheme, which was subsequently discontinued. Now, this Government has re-introduced this scheme improving it further and has also brought in a separate legislation for the same. Under this scheme, 66 lakh eligible agricultural families have been identified as beneficiaries. They are being issued identity cards and will be provided with various welfare benefits.

20. This Government has alleviated the hunger of the poor by providing rice, the most essential among essential commodities, under the Public Distribution System, at a price of only Rs.2/- per Kg., the lowest amongst all States in the Country.

21. Apart from ensuring universalisation of primary education in Tamil Nadu, the quality of education has also been improved by filling the vacant posts of teachers in time scale of pay as well as improving the school infrastructure. In the coming years, we will plan and implement necessary schemes for achieving the ambitious goal of universal secondary education.

22. In consonance with this Government's policy that all good schemes must continue, the scheme of distribution of free bicycles to school students continues

to be implemented by this Government. Under this scheme, 4,84,000 Students are being given free bicycles during this academic year at an estimated cost of Rs.103 crores.

23. It was only during the earlier tenure of Kalaignar as Chief Minister, computer education was introduced in all Government Higher Secondary schools in the academic year 1999-2000. In order to further improve the quality of computer education, this Government will establish computer laboratories in all Government Higher Secondary Schools during the year 2007-2008. Besides this, skill development programmes will be implemented to enable high school drop-outs and those who are not able to pursue higher studies to acquire skill sets necessary for employment.

24. By reviving the 'Varumun Kappom' scheme, this Government has paved the way for the creation of awareness about diseases among people and has facilitated early detection and cure. We are taking sustained action to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates. The Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Assistance Scheme has become a pioneer for the entire country and is playing a significant role in ensuring the welfare of mothers and children. Under this scheme, which provides Rs.6000 each to pregnant mothers, during this year 1,75,532 pregnant mothers have benefited so far.

25. We shall strive to achieve a pre-eminent position for Tamil Nadu in industrial development. In addition, we shall promote industries with potential to create jobs. Priority will be accorded to small scale and agro based industries, which generate large employment opportunities. Further, necessary facilities will be made available for the major export oriented industries in the state.

26. As a result of this Government's easy accessibility to the investors and transparent functioning, Tamil Nadu has become the most favoured destination for all investors. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed for six major industrial projects involving an investment of about Rs.2700 crores, generating direct and indirect employment for 50,000 persons. The decision of major companies like Dell Computers and Samsung to establish their manufacturing units in Tamil Nadu is a major accomplishment of the industrial policy of this

Government. This policy will continue to promote employment opportunities for the local youth in the areas where industries are established.

27. As a result of the efforts of Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Hon'ble Union Ministers from Tamil Nadu, the Union Government approved the establishment of the National Automotive Testing and Research and Development Infrastructure Project (NATRIP) at Oragadam near Chennai. The inauguration of this Project on 4th November 2006 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in the presence of Tmt. Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, following the prompt action of this Government to allot 303 acres of land, has brought cheer to all of us.

28. The Government of Tamil Nadu has introduced Value Added Tax with effect from 1.1.2007 after consultations with traders and manufacturers. As a result of this, prices of goods and commodities have started coming down. The introduction of this Tax in Tamil Nadu has enabled the products from the State to become competitive not only in the national but also in the international markets.

29. The second phase of the scheme for distribution of free colour television sets, which has been implemented as promised in the election manifesto, will commence from 15th February and 25 lakh colour television sets will be distributed. This scheme will be continued in the coming financial years and colour television sets will be distributed to all families who do not have colour television sets. The transparent procurement of 25 lakh colour television sets at a cost of Rs.685 crores, through international competitive bidding, with the approval of a committee comprising of representatives of political parties in the legislature, has won all round appreciation.

30. This Government has announced distribution of free gas stoves with gas connections for the benefit of women belonging to poor families who do not have gas connection and this scheme has commenced from 14th January on the eve of Pongal. Under this scheme, at a cost of Rs.60 crores during this financial year, three lakh families will be given free gas stoves with free gas connections, with the deposit for the connection being paid by the Government. This scheme will be continued in the coming years also.

31. This Government is taking action to establish many new power generation projects, to meet the growing demand for power arising from the continuous improvement in the standard of living of people. Further, the system of payment of electricity charges will be computerized throughout the state.

32. With a view to addressing the infrastructural needs of Chennai metropolis, this Government is formulating and implementing schemes with a long-term perspective. This Government has taken up two desalination projects to provide a lasting solution to the drinking water problem of Chennai City. Taking into account the future transportation needs, a detailed project report is being prepared for the Metro Rail scheme. Further, road works and construction of fly-overs required for Chennai city are being taken up under the World Bank assisted Tamil Nadu Urban Development Project-III and Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

33. As a result of the efforts taken by this Government, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme is being successfully implemented in six districts in Tamil Nadu. We have urged the Union Government to extend this programme to all districts in the State.

34. The scheme of providing assistance up to Rs.300/- per month, to alleviate the sufferings of the unemployed educated youth awaiting jobs after registration in employment exchanges, has been launched on 11.11.2006 by the Hon'ble Chief Minister. I am happy to inform that 2.50 lakh unemployed youth have so far benefited under this scheme, which would continue to be implemented.

35. After this Government assumed office, steps have been initiated to expeditiously fill up the vacancies in various departments of the Government through the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission, Teachers Recruitment Board, Uniformed Services Recruitment Board and Employment Exchanges, along with the relaxation of the qualifying age to join Government service by five years, so as to redress the grievances of the unemployed youth who had been denied employment opportunities in Government service during the last five years.

36. Under the scheme of distribution of free sarees and dhoties to poor women and men, 1.64 crore sarees and 1.64 crore dhoties are being distributed on the eve of Pongal at an estimated cost of Rs.256 crores. This scheme would provide

employment opportunities to around 50,000 weavers and annually benefit 3.28 crore poor people.

37. Various welfare boards which were established during the last tenure of the D.M.K. Government to ensure the social security of the labourers in un-organised sector were abolished subsequently. The re-establishment of these boards, thus ensuring social security to these labourers is a sterling achievement of this Government. In addition, I am happy to announce that this Government which had recently constituted a separate welfare board for the village temple priests, has also decided to establish a separate welfare board for domestic workers, who at present do not have even a modicum of social security. 11 welfare boards have started functioning so far and various benefits amounting to Rs.19.77 crores have been provided to 84,116 un-organised labourers during this year.

38. In addition to doubling the monthly financial assistance to the disabled from Rs.200/- to Rs.400/-, we have also doubled the financial assistance provided for the marriage of the disabled from Rs.10,000 to Rs.20,000. We are making all efforts to provide adequate educational and employment opportunities to the disabled, so that they can lead a life of self-reliance. A separate welfare board for the disabled would be established to provide social security for them.

39. This Government which cares for the welfare of fishermen, who eke out their livelihood by battling the nature everyday, will establish a separate welfare board for the fishermen, on the same lines as the Welfare Board for Agricultural Labourers with a view to providing the required social security and will extend all assistance to them.

40. This Government is proud that the Women Self Help Group movement started by this Government in 1989 at Dharmapuri has emerged as a powerful force at the State level. This Government will extend its full support and encouragement for the continued successful functioning of the Women Self Help Groups. This Government will do the needful to further strengthen the Women Self Help Group movement, to make it capable of effecting major changes, not only in their families but also in the entire society through income generating economic activities, rather than being mere thrift entities.

41. This Government has announced that 10,000 Youth Self Help Groups will be formed to create suitable employment opportunities and better the lives of the unemployed youth. 3500 Youth Self Help Groups have been formed so far under this initiative. Industrial training is being imparted to these youth in collaboration with industries so as to create suitable employment opportunities for them.

42. This Government will strive for the development of the most disadvantaged sections of the society like the poor, downtrodden and differently abled through the 'Vaazhndhu Kattuvom' project. This project at an estimated cost of Rs.717 crores, is being implemented in 15 blocks in 15 Districts in the first phase and will be implemented in 70 blocks in the next 12 months.

43. The Tamil diaspora all over the world whole-heartedly appreciate the unflinching efforts of Hon'ble Chief Minister Kalaignar and his Government to make Mother Tamil ascend the throne in all walks of life by getting Tamil declared as a Classical Language, thus realizing the century-old dream of the Tamils world over and eminent Tamil scholars like Parithimal Kalaignar (Surya Narayana Sastri); ensuring the fulfilment of the demand that the Central Government should establish a Centre at Chennai for the Classical Tamil; enacting a law for making Tamil a compulsory language subject in schools; establishing Scientific Tamil Mandram and making Tamil as a language of the High Court in its proceedings.

44. This Government is deeply concerned about the untold miseries suffered by the Sri Lankan Tamils in recent times without any security for their lives and property. While the letters written by our Hon'ble Chief Minister in this regard to Tmt. Sonia Gandhi, the guiding spirit of the Union Government and the Hon'ble Prime Minister and their replies are a source of solace and hope to the Sri Lankan Tamils, this Government urges that a peaceful political solution through dialogue, as desired by the Union Government, for this long standing problem of Sri Lankan Tamils should be found.

45. You are aware that it was only this Government, which had enacted the legislation for equal rights to property for women in the year 1989 and provided for reservation of 33% of the seats to them in local bodies for the first time in 1996, thereby protecting gender rights. The legislation for 33% reservation for

women in the Parliament and State Legislatures, the next milestone in this progressive march, still remains unrealised. As observed by the Hon'ble Chief Minister in the National Development Council meeting that it would be in the fitness of things if this law is passed at a time when Tmt. Sonia Gandhi is the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, this Government urges the Government of India to expeditiously get this legislation enacted, thereby paving the way to ensure gender equity.

46. This Government, having a long tradition of upholding social justice, shall continue to endeavour for implementation of this policy in all sectors. This Government enacted the law providing for reservation of seats to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities in unaided non-minority private educational institutions. Thanks to the ceaseless efforts of this Government, a law providing for reservation in higher educational institutions of the Union Government has been enacted, marking one more significant victory in the struggle for social justice. This Government urges the Government of India to take necessary steps for implementation of reservation in private sector establishments.

47. This Government issued a landmark order upholding social justice, by which qualified Hindus belonging to all communities can become the Archakas in Hindu temples, thus removing the thorn in the heart of Periyar and realising his dream. The High Level Committee headed by Justice A.K. Rajan constituted by the Government to make recommendations for implementation of this order has submitted its recommendations to the Government. The Government has examined the report of the High Level Committee and accepted all the recommendations of the Committee and issued orders.

48. The nation and the media have commended the steps taken by this Government, within just eight months of assuming office, to enact several landmark legislations to promote equity and social justice, like the Act for repealing of the ban on conversions, thereby safeguarding the welfare of minorities and promoting communal harmony; repeal of the TESMA, which had become a tool for the dismissal of the Government employees without prior notice; a separate Act for the State to celebrate and honour the birthday of the great leader Kamaraj forever, as the 'Education Development Day' and a Bill to

protect the interests of students from rural areas by abolishing the Common Entrance Test for professional courses.

49. This Government is determined to ensure abolition of the abhorrent practice of manual scavenging and rehabilitation of all persons engaged in this vocation. A scheme of providing income earning alternative employments for these persons has been formulated with an outlay of Rs.58.45 crores.

50. This Government with its secular credentials, envisions a society marked by religious harmony and is determined to ensure the same. This Government, deeply committed to the welfare of minorities, will take all necessary measures for their socio-economic betterment, having regard to the 15 Point Programme of the Prime Minister and the recommendations of the Justice Rajindar Sachar Committee relating to representation for minorities, much needed for their development.

51. In addition to announcing a number of concessions for the film industry, this Government has reduced the rates of admission to cinema halls with a view to benefiting the cine goers. This has brought public back to cinema halls to watch movies, thereby leading to the revival of film industry.

52. This Government / is marching ahead, / so majestic with multiple-merits/and it has poured on people / a rain of benefits /

by waiving debt of many crores / of farmers who toil with their sweat that falls on the soil, /

by reducing at once clear / the price of rice that relieves hunger, /

by offering two eggs a week regular / to school children weaker /

by performing many an achievement /that are unexpected by any inhabitant, /

by giving free colour TVs / to huts of our poor people / to make them know of world affairs in series, /

by giving poor farmers only / the wasteland improved even if it be of palm-size

to make true Bharathi's dream / of kaani land concise, /

by reducing fees that students pay / to make them happy straightaway/

like dancing peacocks / or singing cuckoos in play, /
by giving life to gem-like 'Moovalur Ammaiyar' wedding scheme
with an increase of Rupees 5,000/ bettering its gleam / and Rupees 15,000 as
grace gift / to marriages of girls of poverty extreme,
by granting allowance / to jobless educated youth, / every month in continuance /
till they get a job /
by granting Rupees 6,000 prompt /to all the women pregnant;
And transfers instant / to teachers by counselling ardent;
And an increase significant / in Old Age Pension amount;/
And jobs up to three lakh youth / in the first phase to count /
Free gas-stove to kitchen airs, / with free gas-connection wares /
for the cooking mothers in tears / to feel joy with cheers;/
And revival at once of Farmers' Shandy/ which in the past was nullified/
to make farmers and consumers feel gratified /
And Incentive to workers busy / with restoration of wages increased /
And other benefits follow like a serial
with Schemes that are highly beneficial..
And I assure ---/
that this Government, /
without thinking that it is enough just to reign -/
will undoubtedly continue / doing its Service plain, /
not only in the reign of our Land, /but everywhere--in cities, /
towns, / villages, / nooks and crannies, /
even by crossing hills and forests many, /
on principle / that Service to people is Service to Almighty -/
With my assurance this Government will steadfastly march,

I complete my speech, thanking the Hon'ble Members of this August House for their support, cooperation and critical views for the effective implementation of the various special schemes of this Government, thus lending a helping hand and adding strength to this Government headed by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Kalaignar M.Karunanidhi and the people belonging to all sections of the society in our beloved State of Tamil Nadu.

Vanakkam

Jai Hind