

# **Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly,**

## **Vanakkam.**

I deem it a great privilege to address the first session of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly for the year 2021. I extend my New Year and Pongal Greetings to each one of you. This is the concluding session of the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and I take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Members of this August House for their substantial contribution to the development of Tamil Nadu through constructive discussions and debate over many sessions. This Government, under the able stewardship of Hon'ble Chief Minister Thiru Edapadi K. Palaniswami, continues to be guided by the spirit of the late Hon'ble Chief Minister Puratchi Thalaivi

Dr. J Jayalalithaa and has made tremendous strides towards realising the vision of making Tamil Nadu the numero uno State in the country.

2) We are meeting today in the most unusual and unprecedented circumstances. The world has been struck by the most extensive pandemic in living memory. It is to the immense credit of the Hon'ble Chief Minister that the entire Government machinery has been effectively mobilised to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. A series of timely and effective measures have been taken. The lockdown was enforced from March, 2020 to break the transmission chain of the disease while ensuring availability of essential supplies. Carefully calibrated relaxations were

permitted during the lockdown. Effective disease surveillance through fever camps and testing and tracking measures were ensured. Health infrastructure was strengthened, human resources were augmented and effective treatment protocols were adopted. RT-PCR test kits, medical equipment, PPE kits, quality drugs and medicines were made available in adequate quantity.

3) Tamil Nadu is the only major State in the country that has relied on an exclusively RT-PCR based testing strategy, despite the higher costs. This has ensured that the incidence of the disease was correctly detected and further spread contained. The investments by this Government in public health infrastructure

and services have paid rich dividends in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Health infrastructure was scaled up to meet the requirements and 1,38,309 additional bed capacity was created in hospitals and COVID health care centres. Oxygen support was extended to 34,849 beds.

4) All these measures have ensured that Tamil Nadu continues to perform very creditably in controlling the spread of the disease and minimising the loss of lives, not just among the States in India, but even at the global level. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has also maintained the continued vigil against a fresh flare up of the disease. I commend the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the Council of Ministers and the entire Government machinery and in particular the

frontline workers of the Health, Revenue, Police, Local bodies and other departments, who have tirelessly worked as a team to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in Tamil Nadu.

5) I would like to place on record my appreciation of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, for his announcement that the entire population of Tamil Nadu would be vaccinated against COVID-19. The delivery of the vaccine has been smoothly rolled out across the State, in the first instance to health care workers, who are in the frontline of the battle against COVID-19. In the next stage, other frontline workers and the most vulnerable would be provided with the vaccine. The Government will cover the entire population in due course, so that

normal social and economic activity can be fully resumed.

6) The Government has come out with two path-breaking initiatives. The special legislation reserving 7.5 per cent of Government seats in MBBS, BDS, Indian Medicine and Homeopathy courses for students who have studied from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standard in State Government schools and have qualified in the NEET examination, is a significant advancement of social justice and equity. It is heartening to note that 435 students have benefitted this year. The Government further undertook to defray the entire cost of education and hostel accommodation of these students. This will greatly motivate students in Government schools, who are from a poorer

socio-economic background, to aspire for medical education. It will also create a pool of medical professionals willing to serve in remote rural areas of the State. The Hon'ble Chief Minister launched the scheme establishing 2,000 Chief Minister's Amma Mini Clinics which provide free primary health care in remote rural areas and in urban slums. This is already being lauded as a visionary and model scheme worthy of emulation. The Hon'ble Chief Minister deserves special commendation for these two initiatives.

7) The consistent focus of this Government on providing good governance to the people is now widely recognised. Apart from securing the first position in the Good Governance Index released by the

Government of India for the first time last year, Tamil Nadu has been adjudged the overall Best Performing State for the third consecutive year in the 'State of the States' survey carried out by the India Today magazine in November, 2020. This award truly recognizes and highlights the pragmatic, efficient and effective style of governance of the Hon'ble Chief Minister Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami. I congratulate him and the entire government machinery functioning under him on the accolades that the State continues to win at the national level.

8) 'Responsiveness in governance' is the watchword of this Government. Many grievance redressal mechanisms including the 'Amma Thittam', the 'Chief Minister

Special Grievance Redressal' and 'Taluk Online Petition Monitoring System' and the 'Amma Call Centre' are currently functioning. A new 'Integrated and Inclusive Public Grievance Chief Minister Helpline Management System' (IIPGCMS) is being established. This will integrate all the existing grievance redressal systems through the Chief Minister Call Centre Helpline. With a robust routing mechanism and a dashboard for follow up, time bound redressal of all grievances will be ensured. Citizens will very soon be able to access the Government from the comfort of their homes by calling the Chief Minister Helpline at 1100.

9) Law and Order is the highest priority of the Government. The Police Department's role in tackling the pandemic,

especially in contact tracing and in effective enforcement of the lockdown and of containment zones, was particularly significant. Even as the police was fully deployed in enforcing the restrictions, Law and Order continued to be maintained well. Through adequate pre-cautionary measures and by speedy follow up of intelligence inputs, untoward incidents were prevented. The police machinery in the State is fully geared to face all challenges, including the orderly conduct of elections to the Legislative Assembly.

10) Promoting the glory of Tamil language is the foremost goal of this Government. To honour the efforts of those who struggled for the inclusion of Tamil speaking areas into Tamil Nadu,

their monthly financial assistance has been increased from Rs.4,500 to Rs.5,500 and for their legal heirs from Rs.2,500 to Rs.3,000. The monthly financial assistance paid to Tamil Scholars has been enhanced from Rs.3,500 to Rs.4,500 and for their legal heirs from Rs.2,000 to Rs.2,500. The excavations at Keezhadi have yielded rich material remains of the Sangam age culture and the major artefacts will be displayed in a world class site museum that is being constructed by the Government of Tamil Nadu. 3,85,788 words have been uploaded so far in the Sorkuvai Valaithalam (Word Corpus Website). The State Official Language (Legislative) Commission has so far translated 38 Central Acts into Tamil and is preparing a Law Lexicon in Tamil, in which

more than 10,000 words have been compiled so far.

11) The Ninaivu Mandapam befitting the legacy of the late Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Selvi J Jayalalithaa has been thrown open to the public. The residence of the late Hon'ble Chief Minister, 'Veda Nilayam', has been taken over by the Government and converted into a memorial through a special legislation and has been inaugurated. Commemorating the late Hon'ble Chief Minister's remarkable contributions to the field of education, the Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education (TNSCHE) campus has been named as the Dr. J Jayalalithaa campus and a 9 ft. bronze statue of the late Hon'ble Chief Minister has been installed there. The birthday of the

late Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Selvi J Jayalalithaa will be observed as a Government function every year.

12) The 2020-21 financial year began with a substantial slowdown in economic growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain the spread of the disease. In spite of sharply contracting revenues and large additional expenditure requirements, the fiscal situation in this difficult period has been managed deftly. Expenditure on the COVID-19 response, upgrading health infrastructure and on capital works has been stepped up, through reprioritising. The Government has incurred a total expenditure of Rs.13,208 crore so far on COVID-19 relief and response measures from its own resources. Unlike many other

States, Tamil Nadu did not delay or reduce salary payments to its employees. By resorting to timely and cost efficient borrowings, this Government has protected the people of this State from the further adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

13) Tamil Nadu played a key role in the GST Council in resolving the deadlock on payment of compensation to the States on account of the implementation of the GST. Even in this very difficult financial year, this Government has obtained Rs.13,300 crore so far as GST compensation which includes Rs.4,890 crore received as borrowings in lieu of compensation as per the mechanism put in place by the GST Council. It is a matter of satisfaction that the error that occurred in 2017-18 in the IGST allocation between the

Centre and the States has been rectified and this year, Tamil Nadu has finally received its dues of Rs.4,321 crore.

14) The Government appointed a High Level Expert Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. C. Rangarajan, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and former Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, to recommend a series of measures to help important sectors of the economy overcome the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to support and promote further growth. This Government's action on many recommendations of the High Level Committee report is having a favourable impact on economic growth. We are already seeing strong signs of revival in the economy.

15) With the pro-active approach of this Government to encourage investment in sectors critical to the pandemic response like medical equipment, protective clothing, drugs and pharmaceuticals and the efforts to attract investors seeking to relocate in the aftermath of the pandemic, Tamil Nadu was able to attract an unprecedented Rs.60,674 crore worth of investment through 73 Memoranda of Understanding generating employment for 1,00,721 persons, even during the pandemic period. Tamil Nadu received the highest share of investment proposals (16 per cent) in India during April to September, 2020 as per the CARE ratings report. Tamil Nadu has been ranked first by 'Projects Today' in attracting investment during the first two quarters of the COVID-19 pandemic period. This reflects the continued

confidence that investors have reposed in Tamil Nadu and forms the foundation for the strong and sustained rebound of economic growth in the State.

16) Tamil Nadu was struck by two cyclonic storms Nivar and Burevi in the year 2020. We have also had unseasonal heavy rainfall in January which has affected crops on the verge of harvest. The proactive measures taken by the Government ensured that the loss of lives and damage to property were minimised. The needs of all the affected people were immediately attended to and essential services were maintained with minimal disruption. These efforts of the Government came in for well-deserved appreciation in the media and amongst the general public. I commend the Hon'ble

Chief Minister for his personal leadership in organising the relief work. The Government of Tamil Nadu has presented two Memoranda detailing the damages caused by two cyclones amounting to Rs.3,750 crore and Rs.1,514 crore respectively and we urge the Government of India to release funds at the earliest. Even without waiting for the release of Central funds, the State Government has sanctioned Rs.20,000 per hectare as input subsidy for paddy and Rs.10,000 per hectare for dry crops, without limiting the amount of relief payable, to all farmers who have suffered severe crop damages. A total amount of Rs.1,715 crore is being disbursed directly to the bank accounts of 16.78 lakh farmers affected by the two cyclones and the unseasonal rains in January. This timely

assistance has enabled farmers to overcome their distress.

17) The Hon'ble Chief Minister, on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020 announced cash assistance of Rs.1,000 to every family with a rice ration card throughout the State, to help tide over the lockdown. Subsequently, further cash assistance was provided to 28,31,535 rice option family card holders in Chennai and its surrounding areas and in Madurai city when an intensive lockdown was declared in the month of June, 2020. Cash assistance of Rs.476 crore was also distributed to 23,13,957 members of Unorganised Sector Welfare Boards. Based on the Hon'ble Chief Minister announcement, a further cash assistance of Rs.2,500 along with a Pongal gift hamper has been provided to every

family in the State with a rice ration card, to provide succour to the populace which has suffered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the two cyclonic storms and unseasonal rains. This enabled all families in the State to celebrate the Pongal festival joyously and provided a much needed consumption boost to the economy. This cash assistance was in line with the recommendations of Dr. C. Rangarajan Committee.

18) This Government will continue to staunchly protect Tamil Nadu's interests in inter-state river waters issues. It was the strong initiative of this Government which led to the effective implementation of the Final Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and the judgement of the

Supreme Court, with the Government of India notifying the 'Cauvery Water Management Scheme, 2018' comprising the 'Cauvery Water Management Authority' and 'Cauvery Regulation Committee' on 01.06.2018. We have emphatically reiterated to the Government of India that Karnataka should not be permitted to construct any reservoir or diversion structure across the River Cauvery and its tributaries in violation of the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and without the prior consent of Tamil Nadu. I again urge the Government of India to reject the Mekedatu Project proposed by Karnataka, which is in violation of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

19) We urge the Government of India that Kerala should not be allowed to construct any new dam across Periyar river in violation of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. This Government requests the Government of Kerala and the Government of India to quickly accord the requisite clearances for carrying out the remaining works for strengthening the Mullai Periyar Dam. Due to the initiative of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the negotiations at the official level, to reach an amicable agreement on the Parambikulam Aliyar Project and other river water issues with Kerala are progressing. As directed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the suit filed by Tamil Nadu, we have requested the Government of India to constitute a Tribunal under the provisions of the Inter-State

River Water Disputes Act, 1956, to adjudicate the Pennaiyar River Water Dispute.

20) This Government, under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, has focussed on conserving and effectively utilizing the scarce water resources of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has been awarded the National Water Award 2019 by the Ministry of Jal Shakthi as the best performing State. This is a well-deserved recognition for the initiatives undertaken under the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Conservation and Augmentation Mission, including the hugely popular Kudimaramath scheme. Since 2017-18, 6,211 works have been taken up under the Kudimaramath scheme at an estimated cost of Rs.1,418 crore. As part of

the Government's efforts to modernize irrigation systems in Tamil Nadu, the Government has accorded approval for the Extension, Renovation and Modernisation of Grand Anaicut Canal System at an estimated cost of Rs.2,639 crore, with funding from Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Sanction has been accorded for Extension, Renovation and Modernisation of the Lower Bhavani Project at a cost of Rs.933 crore, which will benefit 2.47 lakh acres of irrigated land. The implementation of the 'Nadanthai Vazhi Cauvery' project has also commenced with the laying of the foundation stone for the construction of the Nanjai-Pugalur check dam across the River Cauvery at a cost of Rs.406 crore. Work on the Cauvery-South Vellar link, which is the first stage of the Cauvery-Gundar link will be commenced

shortly. This Government has sanctioned the long-pending Athikadavu-Avinashi Lift irrigation scheme at a cost of Rs.1,652 crore. The works are progressing rapidly and the first phase will be completed before March 2021. Similarly, the Sarabhanga Lift irrigation scheme taken up at a cost of Rs.565 crore, to recharge 100 dry tanks with surplus water from Mettur dam, is expected to be completed by the end of March, 2021.

21) This Government has taken a number of effective measures to protect the interests of our farmers. The Tamil Nadu Protected Agricultural Zone Development Act will protect fertile agricultural lands and safeguard the livelihoods of farmers and agricultural labourers in the Cauvery delta. Through this historic enactment,

the Hon'ble Chief Minister fulfilled a long standing demand of the Cauvery delta region and has rightly earned the title of 'Cauvery Kaapalan'. After 8 years, Mettur Dam was opened on the due date of 12<sup>th</sup> June for Kuruvai paddy cultivation. A total amount of Rs.9,312 crore has been paid to farmers as compensation for crop losses in the last four years under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. To enable farmers in the State to continue getting the protection of crop insurance, this Government is shouldering substantial additional financial burden to implement the revamped Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana in 2020-21, even in a context where, the implementation of this scheme has been halted in many States. Tamil Nadu is the leading State in the implementation of Micro Irrigation in the

country and Micro Irrigation systems have been established over an area of 6.52 lakh acres in 2019-20 with a total subsidy of Rs.1,112 crore to enhance water use efficiency.

22) The initiatives of this Government since 2011 have resulted in the structural transformation of the rural economy, greatly enhancing the share of the livestock sector in Gross State Domestic Product. Totally 1,06,277 poor rural women have received 1,06,277 milch cows and 12,44,010 rural families have received 49,76,040 goats and sheep since 2011 and 3,60,620 families have received 1,09,40,500 birds in poultry units since 2018. The increase in the number of livestock has been backed by linkages to ensure enhanced

and continued availability of fodder, feed, improved veterinary care and sustainable marketing arrangements. The Government has established three more Veterinary Colleges at Thalaivasal, Theni and Udumalpet. The establishment of the Advanced Integrated Institute for Research in Livestock and Animal Sciences at Thalaivasal in Salem District, which is a landmark achievement of this Government is progressing rapidly and the Institute will be functional very soon.

23) This Government is fully committed to protect the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen in their historic fishing waters. This Government strongly condemns the incident in which four fishermen of Tamil Nadu lost their lives

when a Sri Lankan naval vessel deliberately collided with their fishing vessel while the fishermen were engaged peacefully in fishing in their traditional waters. This Government has announced a compensation of Rs.10 lakh for each deceased fisherman's family and a Government related job for a legal heir of the deceased fishermen. We have strongly urged the Government of India to take up this issue with the Sri Lankan authorities. The Government continues to take proactive measures to bring back the remaining 12 fishermen in Sri Lankan custody.

24) Promoting deep sea fishing to enable Tamil Nadu fishermen to take advantage of the Exclusive Economic Zone of 200 nautical miles, is an important priority. Deep sea fishing boats are currently under

construction and on shore infrastructure including fishing harbours, fish landing centres, cold storage and marketing facilities are being rapidly developed. Fishing harbours at Thengapattinam at a cost of Rs.97 crore, Mookaiyur at a cost of Rs.129 crore and Poempuhar at a cost of Rs.178 crore and a fish landing centre at Kunthukkal at a cost of Rs.70 crore have been completed. The construction of fishing harbours at Thiruvotriyur Kuppam at a cost of Rs.200 crore, Tharangambadi at a cost of Rs.120 crore, Vellapallam at a cost of Rs.100 crore and at Mudunagar at a cost of Rs.100 crore is progressing rapidly. Financial support has been tied up to construct fishing harbours at Azhagan Kuppam, Alamparai Kuppam and Arcottuthurai at a total cost of Rs.385 crore.

The Government has undertaken a number of measures to ensure the safety of fishermen in the deep sea. A seamless satellite based communication system has been established with the assistance of ISRO. The Marine Enforcement Wing with 112 police personnel under the Department of Fisheries has been created.

25) I am happy to inform this August House that Tamil Nadu has implemented the One Nation One Ration Card system, which will greatly benefit poor families who migrate in search of jobs both within and outside the State, to draw their rations. As a measure of COVID relief, 19.95 lakh metric tonnes additional free rice was supplied to all ration card holders. Dhall, palmolein oil and sugar as per entitlement

were also supplied free of cost to all ration card holders in the State from April 2020 to July 2020. The State Government took on an additional subsidy burden of Rs.5,402 crore for these measures.

26) As you are well aware, Tamil Nadu is a leading destination for investment. Out of the 304 Memoranda of Understanding signed in the Global Investors Meet, 2019, 81 projects have commenced commercial production and 191 projects are at various stages of implementation. Since the Global Investors Meet 2019, Tamil Nadu has attracted investment into 149 more projects with a cumulative investment of Rs.1,06,664 crore offering employment to 2,42,705 persons. I compliment the Hon'ble Chief Minister for his direct involvement and

proactive efforts in attracting investments on such a large scale even during the COVID-19 pandemic. To encourage investment in sunrise sectors, the Government has announced an Electric Vehicle Policy and an Electronic Hardware Manufacturing Policy which have both proven to be attractive. The New Industrial Policy has been approved by the Government and will be unveiled shortly, providing a further fillip to industrial growth.

27) The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in Tamil Nadu are not only a nursery of entrepreneurship, but also provide employment to large numbers. Tamil Nadu has 23.60 lakh registered units with a total investment of Rs.2,73,241 crore providing employment to 1.52 crore persons. The new MSME policy has been finalised after

consultation with multiple stakeholders and will be released by the Hon'ble Chief Minister shortly. In order to help MSMEs tide over the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government frontloaded release of different kinds of subsidies and co-ordinated effectively with banks and financial institutions to ensure that MSME units in Tamil Nadu benefit through the Government of India's 'Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme' (ECLGS). To facilitate quick access to loans under the ECLG Scheme and to provide relief to MSMEs, the Government exempted payment of Stamp Duty for registration of Agreements relating to Memorandum of Deposit of Title Deeds (equitable mortgages) for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021. The Registration Fee was reduced to 0.1 per cent from 1 per cent for such agreements for

micro and small enterprises. To further ease access to formal credit, the Government will amend the Registration Act, 1908 to permit online registration of Agreements relating to Memorandum of Deposit of Title Deeds for availing term loans and working capital loans and do away with the need for the physical presence of borrowers and lenders for execution of such deeds. The Hon'ble Chief Minister personally convened a special State Level Bankers Committee meeting during the pandemic to exhort bankers to lend to MSMEs to enable them to overcome the crisis. Due to these proactive measures, Tamil Nadu had the highest availment amongst all States under the ECLG scheme.

28) The Government will infuse fresh additional capital of Rs.1,000 crore

over three years into the Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC) to enable TIIC to function as an effective term lending institution and also expand lending operations and cover the large number of MSME units that still do not have access to institutional credit.

29) Tamil Nadu, which is at the forefront of utilising Information and Communication Technology to ensure enhanced public service delivery, was awarded the Gold Award by the President of India, in the 'Excellence in Digital Governance' category at the Digital India Awards, 2020. Large ICT projects of backend computerisation have been effectively implemented including the 'Integrated Financial and Human Resources Management

System' (IFHRMS) project which has been successfully rolled out throughout the State. The 'Tamil Nadu Blockchain Policy' aims to introduce front line technology in the e-governance structure of the State, with Tamil Nadu's blockchain backbone, 'Nambikai Inaiyam', enabling seamless and secure delivery of various Government services. The 'Tamil Nadu Policy for Safe and Ethical Artificial Intelligence' aims to make Tamil Nadu a hub for Artificial Intelligence technology companies and investments. The Government is also committed to ensure the highest standards of security and privacy of data through the recently released 'Cyber Security Policy'. The 'BharatNet Project' will be rolled out to one third of the revenue villages in the State by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021 and to the remaining villages by

30<sup>th</sup> November, 2021. By combining BharatNet with TNSWAN, TamilNet and TACTV's broadcast infrastructure, a convergent digital service delivery platform – 'Unified Digital Infrastructure'- will be built to deliver high speed, scalable bandwidth to all households in the State.

30) A key element of infrastructure in Tamil Nadu is the supply of quality and reliable power to all consumers. The State continues to be power surplus. In the past 10 years, 15,745 MW of generation capacity has been added to reach a total installed capacity of 32,149 MW. Of this, 16,166 MW of power is renewable energy capacity including hydroelectric power. Large investments have also been made to enhance the capacity of both the

transmission and distribution networks to ensure reliable supply of power.

31) The high quality road network of Tamil Nadu sustains economic growth. To improve traffic flow in important cities including Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai, fly overs and grade separators have been taken up. To provide congestion free access to Coimbatore City, an elevated flyover from Goldwins to Uppilipalayam has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs.1,620 crore. Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project Phase II with World Bank assistance, Chennai Peripheral Road project with JICA and AIIB assistance and Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor project with ADB assistance are being taken up. Road safety continues to be the highest priority for

the State Government and due to concerted efforts, the trend of reducing the number of road accidents and fatal road accidents has continued with the total number of accidents declining from 71,431 in 2016 to 45,489 in 2020 and fatal accidents declining from 17,218 in 2016 to 8,060 in 2020. Tamil Nadu has won the award for the Best State in reducing fatal accidents for the years, 2018 and 2019.

32) The Government is committed to further increasing the ridership share of public transportation in the State by improving the quality of bus transport while maintaining fares at an affordable level. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were severe restrictions on the operation of bus transport. The operations of the Transport

Corporations are slowly returning to normal with adherence to all pre-cautions to control the spread of the virus.

33) Passenger services in the extension of Phase I of the Chennai Metro Rail Project from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar will be inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister later this month. The foundation stone for the 118.9 km long Chennai Metro Rail Project Phase II at an estimated cost of Rs.61,843 crore was laid by the Hon'ble Union Home Minister. The financing for the project has been tied up with JICA, ADB, AIIB and the New Development Bank. We are urging the Government of India to accord formal approval for their equity participation on the

50:50 sharing model for Phase II of the project.

34) Urban Local Bodies in Tamil Nadu have been at the forefront of the control of COVID-19 pandemic. The various urban infrastructure programmes funded by the Central and State Governments and external aid agencies are being implemented with vigour. Recycling and reuse of waste water for recharging of urban water bodies is being taken up in a systematic manner. In addition to the two existing 45 MLD Tertiary Treatment Reverse Osmosis Plants, two 10 MLD Sewage Tertiary Treatment Ultra Filtration Plants are under construction at Perungudi and Nesapakkam to recharge Perungudi and Porur lakes.

35) This Government is committed to providing quality housing to the poorest households in urban and rural areas. Each poor family without a house will be provided a concrete roofed house in rural areas and an apartment in a multi-storied building in urban areas. A special additional allocation of Rs.70,000 per house in the rural areas taken up under the Prime Minister Awaz Yojana (Gramin) has been sanctioned, which would enable the speedy completion of 2,57,925 houses under construction in rural areas of the State. With this, as against the unit cost of Rs.1.20 lakh per house approved by the Government of India under the PMAY-Gramin, the unit cost in Tamil Nadu would be Rs.2.40 lakh with the State Government's share at Rs.1.68 lakh per house. The Tamil Nadu Affordable Urban

Housing and Habitat Policy has been formulated to expand access to housing in urban areas. The Government has also mobilised financing from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank for urban housing in the State. With simplification of rules and enhanced delegation of powers, the process of granting plan permissions has been considerably speeded up. Through the regularisation scheme for unapproved layouts, 39,939 layouts and 21,86,101 plots have been regularised. Based on wide spread demand to cover left out cases, the last date for applications for regularising layouts which had been formed on or before 20.10.2016, has been extended till 28.02.2021.

36) Protecting forests and increasing tree cover is the highest priority of this

Government. Tamil Nadu achieved an increase of 8,302 hectares in forest area and 159 sq. km of tree cover between 2017 and 2019 as per the India State of Forest Report 2019. The State has achieved the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank in India in forest tree diversity. Protecting the habitat for wildlife has resulted in an increase in tiger population from 229 in 2014 to 264 in 2018.

37) Translating Tamil Nadu's demographic dividend into progress and prosperity requires the potential of youth to be fully developed. Hence, education continues to be a very high priority investment for this State. Since 2017-18, nineteen new Government Arts and Science colleges, five Government Polytechnic colleges and three University constituent

colleges have been established. In addition, a large number of new courses have been commenced in each of these colleges and investments have been made to upgrade quality in universities and colleges. To facilitate online classes, 9.69 lakh students in Government and Government aided colleges and those receiving scholarships in self-financing colleges, have been provided a data sim card with 2GB per day capacity for four months.

38) The challenge in the current academic year has been to ensure that there is no loss of continuity in children's education. The various benefits that school children receive, including the nutritious noon meal, text books, note books and school supplies are being distributed to

them through the pandemic period. The Government has taken a number of measures to ensure that students are able to access educational content through Kalvi TV and 10 private TV channels. The free distribution of laptops scheme has been effectively leveraged by uploading video lessons through hi-tech labs and multiple internet platforms have been utilised to deliver digital content. The Government has constituted two committees to examine the implications of the New Education Policy of the Government of India for school and higher education in the State. This Government is fully committed to the continuance of the Two Language Policy in the State and there shall be no dilution in this regard.

39) Skill development continues to be a high priority for the Government and the Apex Skill Development Centres (ASDC) in the Auto, Auto components, Machine tools, Hospital and Health Care services, Transportation and Logistics sectors are now functional. A Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Apex Skill Development Centre in the Construction and Infrastructure sector has also been signed. Over and above the on-going Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the Government of Tamil Nadu from its own resources has sanctioned a total amount of Rs.682 crore for the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Mission since 2013-14.

40) Tamil Nadu displayed compassion in handling migrant labourers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Free food

was provided to lakhs of construction and other workers throughout the State. Dry ration kits were provided to 22,74,582 unorganised workers and interstate migrant workers. This Government met the cost of repatriation of 4,03,042 migrant workers to their native places through special train services. A portal for Inter-State Migrant Workers has been developed and at present, data relating to 3,16,368 Inter-State Migrant Workers in Tamil Nadu has been uploaded. The compassionate treatment and effective relief measures have meant that many migrant workers have returned to their jobs in Tamil Nadu after the lockdown restrictions were lifted and continue to be important contributors to Tamil Nadu's economy.

41) In order to enhance the welfare of workers in the fireworks and match industry, this Government constituted the Tamil Nadu Fire and Match Worker's Welfare Board on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.

42) This Government is firmly committed to improve the welfare of working women. Through the implementation of the Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme, Child Sex Ratio has improved. Special efforts have been taken to reduce crime against women and children by effective enforcement of legal provisions. The Tamil Nadu Working Women Hostels Corporation Limited has been established to enhance the availability of safe, quality and affordable accommodation for working women. The entire State is being covered

under the Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission and National Urban Livelihood Mission. Under the Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission, Rs.14,000 crore has been targeted for SHG-bank credit linkage. A special COVID Assistance Package at a cost of Rs.300 crore has been implemented to assist 2,53,457 beneficiaries in 120 Blocks under the Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project (TNRTP).

43) Tamil Nadu has been a forerunner in protecting destitute elders, widows, differently abled persons, unmarried women and deserted wives. Totally 33,60,021 persons are receiving social security and old age pension. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 is being effectively

implemented and 3,966 petitions seeking maintenance allowance have been disposed. The State Action Plan for Senior Citizens comprising 5 components will be implemented shortly.

44) This Government is committed to ensuring the full participation of differently abled persons in all realms of socio-economic activity. Special care was taken to ensure access of differently abled persons to their basic requirements during the lockdown period and the maintenance assistance was paid two months in advance. A special cash assistance of Rs.1,000 was distributed to all differently abled persons holding National Identity Cards, and Rs.5.31 crore worth of dry rations and medical kits were provided. Accessibility audit of all public offices is being

taken up progressively. A special recruitment drive to fill the special quota of 4 per cent in Government establishments has been launched to clear backlog vacancies intended for the differently abled.

45) This Government will also continue to implement schemes for the economic development and social advancement of Adi-dravidars, Scheduled Tribes, Backward and Most Backward Classes, Denotified Communities and Minorities. I thank the Government of India for restructuring the post matric scholarship for Scheduled Castes on a 60:40 sharing basis accepting the request of the Hon'ble Chief Minister. We expect that all students currently deriving benefit from the present

scholarship scheme will continue to do so under the new scheme as well.

46) Thai Poosam is an important festival of Tamil Nadu and in response to a number of requests from general public, the Government has declared Thai Poosam as a public holiday. From 2011 to 2020, 11,464 temples were renovated and consecrated at a cost of Rs.551 crore. The retaining walls of Ilamaiyakkinar Temple tank in Chidambaram, which were damaged due to heavy rains in November - December, 2020 are being reconstructed at an estimated cost of Rs.2.61 crore. The retaining walls of the Nagore Dargah Tank in Nagapattinam, which were damaged due to Nivar and Burevi cyclones, are being reconstructed at an estimated cost of

Rs.4.34 crore. The Government has increased the financial assistance for undertaking the Haj and Jerusalem pilgrimages. The State Minorities Commission will be expanded through suitable legislation to provide representation to linguistic minorities.

47) The year 2020 is an unforgettable year in the history of mankind. We are bound to overcome the pandemic, through will and determination. As a collective, the people of India and Tamil Nadu in particular, have coped with this unprecedented crisis, with the conviction, that the years to come will see renewed progress and development. I use this occasion to place on record my heart felt gratitude to the frontline staff and officials of

the Health, Revenue, Police, Local Bodies and all other Government departments who have worked tirelessly during this period, the Members of this House and all the citizens of the State who have contributed to the COVID pandemic response. I thank each one of you for your contribution.

48) Tamil Nadu has emerged at the forefront in all sectors and has been commended as one of the best administered States in the country. The State has made tremendous strides in various fields and has won a large number of awards at the National level for exemplary performance. I congratulate and compliment the entire governmental machinery of the State of Tamil Nadu led by the Hon'ble Chief Minister for this exceptional performance.

49) We are in the last session of the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu. On behalf of the Government, I have outlined various policy initiatives and interventions. There are many achievements of which this Government can be justifiably proud of. All Members of this House have contributed to the democratic debate and deliberations over the last five years and thereby enriched policy content and enabled effective implementation. I wish each one of you a very Happy New Year 2021 and Happy Pongal.

**Nanri**

**Vanakkam**

**Jai Hind**