

**Hon'ble Members of the Legislative
Assembly,**

Vanakkam.

I am immensely honoured to address this august House on the occasion of its inaugural session for the year 2014. On this happy occasion, I convey my hearty New Year greetings to all of you. This is my third consecutive inaugural address to this House and I am grateful to the people of Tamil Nadu for this opportunity. This august House has the sacred duty to fulfill the aspirations of the people, who have reposed their faith in you. Towards this, let us begin this New Year with a solemn resolve to strive for the growth and prosperity of the State and the welfare of the people of Tamil Nadu.

2) This Government will soon complete three successful years in office.

This period has witnessed momentous changes and great accomplishments. The dream of inclusive growth has become a reality. This was due to the vision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister **Selvi J Jayalalithaa** to adopt an inclusive growth model, placing the highest emphasis on equitable development and on greater participation of the common people in the socio-economic development process of the State. Towards this, many well-conceived development schemes targeting specific sectors and regions have been launched. Problems of poverty and unemployment are being comprehensively dealt with. Several infrastructure projects with the potential to trigger long term economic growth have been planned and executed. Above all, the bedrock for growth and development - public order - is being maintained without blemish, instilling confidence in the administration.

3) The people have wholeheartedly appreciated such progressive measures. The resounding victory in the recent by-election for the Yercaud constituency is yet another proof of the people's continuing faith in the astute and dynamic leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister. This Government will spare no effort to ensure that this trend continues in the future also.

4) There have been challenges, which have been overcome with fortitude and resolute action. Tamil Nadu is a water starved State and subject to the vagaries of the Monsoons. The year 2012-2013 witnessed a severe drought, hitting agricultural production hard and impairing economic growth. We were able to overcome the calamity of widespread crop failure, only due to the thoughtful and generous gesture of the Hon'ble Chief Minister in announcing and

implementing a timely and liberal relief package at a cost of Rs.1,614 crore. This apart, the global economic downtrend and the resultant domestic slowdown, which was also fuelled by the faulty macro-economic policies of the Central Government, have affected growth in Tamil Nadu. This Government, on its part, is trying hard to reverse this trend. In spite of all such challenges, I am sure that our State will emerge victoriously from this difficult situation under the indefatigable and sagacious leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

5) Maintenance of public order and ensuring public safety is an essential prerequisite for socio-economic development. Ever since this Government took over, it has given topmost priority to maintenance of law and order. Firm and timely actions of this Government have preserved public order

in the State. Sensitive festivals and anniversaries of leaders passed off peacefully due to effective steps taken by the law enforcement machinery. The attempts of the Maoists to establish their base in the tri-junction area of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka were thwarted by constant vigil. Anti-social elements trying to disturb communal harmony in the State were decisively handled. I am proud to note that the State is free from any major law and order incident. This has been made possible only due to the determination and clear decisions of the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

6) In the last three years, the Police Force was liberally supported with additional manpower, modern weapons, equipment and other infrastructure. Including 10,500 posts for the Tamil Nadu Special Police Youth Brigade, 24,503 additional posts have been added to the policing strength. An amount

of Rs.178.65 crore has been allocated by this Government for strengthening mobility, weaponry and other equipment. The State has also witnessed an unprecedented expenditure of Rs.1,448.74 crore for construction of buildings and other infrastructure for the effective functioning of the Police Force.

7) The administrative acumen and foresight shown by the Hon'ble Chief Minister in allowing the Police Force to function freely and effectively has re-invigorated the Force. Encouraged by the support of this Government, the Tamil Nadu Police have performed many spectacular, courageous and gallant acts including the recent arrest of two most wanted terrorists by storming their hideout in Puttur in Andhra Pradesh. Rightly, the Hon'ble Chief Minister rewarded them for such exceptional valour and her unique gesture of personally congratulating all the

260 Police personnel involved, will go a long way in boosting the morale of the entire Police Force.

8) The humanitarian problem of Sri Lankan Tamils being treated as second class citizens in their own land in post-ethnic conflict Sri Lanka and the failure to hold the Sri Lankan regime to account for acts of genocide in the closing stages of the civil war are major emotive issues in the State. This august House has passed resolutions on four separate occasions calling for a firm diplomatic stance to hold the Sri Lankan regime to account for the inhuman acts against the Tamil minority and to secure their basic rights including the right to self-determination. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has written several times to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on this issue as well. Even after the Hon'ble Chief Minister conveyed the strong feelings of Tamils, the Union Minister

for External Affairs participated in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Sri Lanka. This Government will continue to staunchly support the cause of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka until their rights are secured.

9) The continuing, unprovoked, dastardly, murderous attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy upon the innocent Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu, who are only pursuing their livelihood in their traditional fishing areas of the Palk Strait, have agitated the entire fisherfolk community in Tamil Nadu. During the last two and a half years, the Hon'ble Chief Minister has also written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on a number of occasions, seeking firm and decisive diplomatic action on this sensitive issue. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has been waging a heroic and relentless struggle to retrieve Kachatheevu, which has been a part

of India geographically, culturally and historically. In a deft move, and with a spirit of accommodation, the Hon'ble Chief Minister agreed to the holding of direct talks between the fishermen communities in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. With great tact, the Hon'ble Chief Minister has secured the release of 295 fishermen and their 45 boats from prolonged Sri Lankan custody.

10) A significant accomplishment of this Government is the acquisition of shareholding in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation, which was divested by the Government of India. The Hon'ble Chief Minister came up with a timely and unconventional solution to a complex problem which was threatening industrial peace and also the power situation in the State. The Hon'ble Chief Minister's brilliant solution dispelled the fear and apprehension in the minds of the workers and put an end

to a potential major outbreak of labour unrest.

11) Recently, the Fourteenth Finance Commission visited the State. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has presented the State's views in unequivocal terms. She has pointed out that the fundamental imbalance in the constitutional scheme in the sharing of resource raising powers and of responsibilities for service delivery should be addressed in a fair and transparent manner. The State has demanded a higher vertical devolution and a more transparent and equitable horizontal sharing of Central tax revenues without penalizing progressive States. I hope the Finance Commission will act in a fair and equitable manner and render justice to a well performing State like Tamil Nadu, which has been unfairly discriminated against by Finance Commissions in the past.

12) Our country is going through a difficult period of economic slowdown. The Gross Domestic Product growth forecasts are being downscaled continuously. The country is facing a complex problem of rising inflation, falling growth and instability in exchange rates. This has particularly affected Tamil Nadu, which is a manufacturing and exporting State. Against this tide, this Government is determined to revive the economy and improve the general economic environment. Though growth in 2012-2013 was only 4.14 percent, we expect growth to revive and comfortably exceed 5 percent during 2013-2014. There is a revival in industrial and agricultural production which would result in a rebound in the service sector growth. To give a fillip to the economy, this Government has substantially increased the Plan expenditure target for the year 2013-2014 to Rs.37,128 crore.

For the year 2014-2015, the Plan size would be further increased to a level of Rs.42,185 crore.

13) Despite repeated efforts by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the Government of India is yet to constitute the Cauvery Management Board and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee to ensure effective implementation of the Final Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal. In the absence of Cauvery Management Board, the attempt made by Karnataka to rejuvenate river Arkavati and modernise Hemavathy canals is a violation of the Final Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal. The State Government had approached the Supreme Court on 11.11.2013 for a direction to Government of India to forthwith constitute the Cauvery Management Board and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee.

14) Whenever people from Tamil Nadu face hardship, this Government has always rushed to their rescue, wherever they may be. The efforts taken by this Government to bring back hundreds of pilgrims from Tamil Nadu who were stranded in the hilly regions of Uttarakhand due to flash floods and catastrophic landslides are laudable. Similarly, this Government also took indefatigable and persistent efforts to bring back 16 fishermen of Nagapattinam, Ramanathapuram and Kanniyakumari Districts languishing in Iranian prisons for more than eight months. Due to the timely intervention of this Government, 18 fishermen from Kanniyakumari District, whose boats were sunk due to the 'Phailin' cyclone which struck the Odisha coast, were also safely rescued. I also appreciate the immediate intervention of the State Government to rescue the affected

Tamil people in the recent boat capsized in Andaman Islands.

15) The Hon'ble Chief Minister has come out with a plethora of announcements to fulfill the aspirations of the people. These announcements made in the Budget and in the Legislative Assembly by the Hon'ble Chief Minister are already under implementation. The recent Annual Conference of District Collectors and Police Officers also assumed a special significance, as it witnessed the sanction of 312 proposals put forth by the Collectors and Police Officers, mostly pertaining to roads, bridges, drinking water supply and provision of other basic infrastructure and public services. Public needs articulated by the cutting edge level of administration were immediately met. This is yet another illustration of the responsiveness of this Government.

16) This Government has taken a number of pro-active steps to improve the delivery of and greater accessibility to public services. The Revenue Department provides vital services to the people on a day-to-day basis. In this regard, this Government has formed 25 new Taluks during 2013-2014, in addition to the 9 Taluks formed during 2012-2013. To enhance the facilities for the public visiting various Government offices, building infrastructure is being created for District Collectorates, Revenue Divisional Offices and Taluk Offices, wherever required.

17) This Government has introduced a novel scheme called AMMA Thittam, which aims at '**A**ssured **M**aximum service to **M**arginal people in **A**ll villages'. This Scheme takes the Government machinery to the doorsteps of the people with officials visiting villages every Friday and redressing their grievances within the shortest possible time.

During the first phase of the AMMA Thittam, all the villages in the State were covered and 33.13 lakh petitions pertaining to the issue of various certificates, social security pensions, patta transfers and other grievances of the people were dealt with. The scheme is in its second phase and has received an overwhelming response from the public.

18) Promotion of the Tamil language, arts and culture always gains prominence under the able leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister. An exclusive website has been created for the World Tamil Sangam, Madurai to provide support for promoting the Tamil language globally. An amount of Rs.4.17 crore was sanctioned for the construction of a new administrative building for the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Taramani, and its foundation stone was laid by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on

23rd December, 2013. Establishment of Sangam Tamil Gallery in Madurai is also in progress. This Government played a pivotal role in organizing a three day celebration to mark the Centenary Year of Indian Cinema in September 2013. For the first time in the history of the State, a separate University has been established for music and fine arts. Restoration of the heritage building of the famous National Art Gallery in the Government Museum, Chennai, at a cost of Rs.11 crore and the establishment of a Field Fossil Museum in Ariyalur at a cost of Rs.2 crore are some of the initiatives which signal the revival of the spirit of preserving our ancient heritage.

19) I commend the exemplary efforts of the Hon'ble Chief Minister in bringing the prestigious FIDE World Chess Championship Match, 2013 to India for the first time ever. The well organised and colourful event was

conducted successfully in Chennai in a grand manner with the Government grant of Rs.29.15 crore. A plethora of initiatives to promote sports among the youth have also been launched. One such initiative is the award of special scholarships of Rs.25 lakh each to five elite sportspersons, to groom them for the Olympics and other International events. The State has witnessed an unprecedented flow of funds for strengthening sports infrastructure. I am confident that this will go a long way in further developing the sporting culture in the State and bring with it the attendant social benefits.

20) Inclusive growth is not possible without achieving a substantial increase in the income of the people engaged in the Primary Sector. This Government lays special emphasis on improving the production and productivity of agricultural

crops by adopting strategies like disseminating high-end technologies, popularising micro irrigation and promoting farm mechanisation. Substantial investments are being made in developing the post-harvest and market infrastructure. More innovative approaches are being followed to promote the cultivation of high value crops including fruits and vegetables. It is heartening to note that the State has been awarded with the Krishi Karman award by the Government of India in 2013 for achieving higher food grain production during 2011-2012. Though the State has faced a shortfall of 33 percent in the North-East Monsoon rains, the food grain production is expected to surpass 100 lakh Metric Tonnes during 2013-2014.

21) To assure remunerative prices to farmers for their produce, this Government has fixed the Minimum Support Price for

paddy at Rs.1,360 per quintal and Rs.1,415 per quintal for common and fine varieties respectively during the 2013-2014 Kharif season, much above the Minimum Support Price of Rs.1,310 and Rs.1,345 fixed by the Government of India. Similarly, the State has fixed the State Advised Price for sugarcane at Rs.2,650 per MT, inclusive of Rs.100 per MT for transportation cost, even though the Government of India fixed the Fair and Remunerative Price only at Rs.2,100 per MT for the current year.

22) The rural economy mainly hinges on the growth of agriculture and allied sectors. The Hon'ble Chief Minister's flagship programme of distributing milch cows to genuinely poor persons has provided high value economic assets to over 32,000 poor persons in the last two and a half years. Similarly, the distribution of free sheep and goats to the poor people in the rural areas

has benefited 3.72 lakh landless poor women beneficiaries. This Government also gives greater importance to strengthening of veterinary infrastructure, in order to sustain the growth of the Animal Husbandry Sector.

23) Tamil Nadu is the only State in the country to implement a Universal Public Distribution System to ensure food security to all. Over 1.86 crore families are benefited with free rice, subsidized dal, edible oil, wheat, sugar and kerosene. An amount of Rs.4,900 crore has been allocated as food subsidy during 2013-2014. This Government is of the view that the National Food Security Act as enacted by the Government of India will not achieve the goal of food security effectively. Although, the Government of India modified the Draft Bill to protect the current level of allocation and offtake of food grains under the Public Distribution System due to the persistent efforts of the Hon'ble

Chief Minister, the Act still has several shortcomings. Lack of long term guarantees on pricing of the food grains, limited coverage of the urban population and lack of clear guidelines for identification of eligible households are issues with the National Food Security Act which could compromise the desired outcome. I reiterate the position of this Government that the new system brought in by the Act should provide sufficient flexibility to protect the Universal Public Distribution System currently being implemented in Tamil Nadu.

24) This Government is taking all possible measures to insulate the poor from the rising prices of essential commodities. Apart from supplying essential commodities at subsidized cost, the Price Stabilization Fund of Rs.100 crore is being used for selective market interventions to procure and supply various essential commodities at cost

price. The opening of the Farm Fresh Vegetable shops in Chennai has received many accolades, as it links farmers directly with the consumers, thus benefiting both. Launching of Amma Drinking Water and Amma Unavagams are landmark initiatives taken by this Government to serve the poor better. The 290 Amma Unavagams that have been opened so far in Chennai and in other cities are a boon to the poor and downtrodden. It is no wonder that other States are emulating this noble initiative envisioned by the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

25) The Tamil Nadu Vision 2023 document unveiled by the Hon'ble Chief Minister heralded a new era for guided economic development, particularly in developing economic infrastructure in the State. In this document, 217 priority infrastructure projects have been specifically identified for execution. A policy framework

and institutional support system has been put in place in the form of the Tamil Nadu Infrastructure Development Act, Rules and Regulations. A legislative framework to deal with Public-Private-Partnership projects has also been put in place in the form of the Tamil Nadu Transparency in Tenders (Public-Private-Partnership Procurement) Rules. Tamil Nadu is the first State to have such a legislative framework.

26) The Tamil Nadu Investment Promotion Programme (TNIPP) with the assistance of the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), a very innovatively designed programme, was launched by this Government with an assistance of Rs.770 crore. This project is aimed at the removal of infrastructural bottlenecks through small and medium size projects. Twelve such projects at an estimated cost of Rs.834 crore have already

been approved under this programme covering sectors like Power, Water Supply, Urban Amenities and Roads. This is a new initiative which provides a flexible funding option with external aid to improve the investment climate in the State.

27) The greatest challenges faced by this Government are in the Power Sector. Huge power shortage, weak transmission and distribution infrastructure and debt trapped power utilities were some of the challenges inherited by this Government. It is the ingenuity and broad vision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister which have guided the dramatic turnaround in the Power Sector. Substantial new capacity has been added by expediting pending power generation projects like Unit I and II of TNEB-NTPC joint venture project at Vallur, Stage III of the Mettur Power Project and Unit I and II of the North Chennai Thermal Power Project –

Stage II. These developments have provided great relief to the people of our State.

28) Huge investments have also been made in strengthening the transmission and distribution infrastructure including evacuation of Wind Power. Added to this, long term power purchase agreements have also been made to fortify the power supply in the long run. This will ensure reliable power supply once the connectivity of the Southern Grid with other power grids gets stabilised. In addition, this Government has put in the pipeline several new thermal and hydro power projects. It has also placed a greater emphasis on harnessing Solar Power by unveiling an investor friendly New Solar Power Policy. All these efforts will certainly ensure adequate power availability in the State, boosting industrial development in the future.

29) Tamil Nadu is the first State to execute the Financial Restructuring Plan (FRP) to mitigate the financial crisis faced by its power utility. As per the plan, a liability of Rs.6,353 crore has to be taken over by the State Government, which will be discharged over a period of five years. I am confident that these efforts will certainly restore the financial health of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO).

30) Road transport plays a pivotal role in economic development. This Government is giving special priority to develop ring roads and bypasses to ease traffic flow in urban areas. Several such works are at various stages of implementation across the State. The existing roads are also being upgraded continuously under the Comprehensive Road Infrastructure Development Programme (CRIDP). During 2013-2014, this

Government has provided Rs.2,500 crore for widening 1,697 km of roads, improvement of 3,529 km roads and construction of 229 bridges and culverts.

31) Tamil Nadu continues to be a preferred destination for investment, particularly in the Manufacturing Sector. Investors continue to prefer Tamil Nadu because of the better infrastructure, well maintained law and order and skilled manpower. This Government is promoting balanced industrial development, particularly in the Southern Districts, for which a special package of incentives has been announced. A corridor based approach is envisioned for targeting more investment to promote industries in backward areas. The implementation of the Madurai-Thoothukudi Industrial Corridor is gathering pace and will facilitate the growth of manufacturing hubs, knowledge hubs and agricultural production

zones, with enormous potential for employment and exports.

32) The Hon'ble Chief Minister has recently pointed out that the State at present enjoys a demographic dividend of having a very high proportion of its population in the working age group, an advantage which may not last very long. Therefore, the State is focusing on enhancing investment in social and economic infrastructure to capitalize on this advantage before it fades away. Distribution of free Laptop computers is one such landmark initiative. The unique initiative of the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Mission has already been launched to deal with the challenges of building the skill level of our youth to make them employable. As a part of this initiative, **this Government will launch a "State Portal on Employment" as an integrated platform for job seekers and employers.**

This offers a single window of information on job counseling, training and placement facilitation. Further, the State will also seek funding and technical support for the State Skill Development Mission from international funding agencies.

33) This Government has launched a number of schemes for the welfare of the people, particularly to provide food, clothing and shelter for dignified living to the poor in the rural areas. Amongst these schemes, the Chief Minister's Solar Powered Green House Scheme stands out as a unique programme. Over the last three years, 1.80 lakh houses have been sanctioned. This year, the unit cost has also been increased to Rs.2.10 lakh from Rs.1.80 lakh. This scheme will further benefit another 1.2 lakh poor families in the next two years. The Tamil Nadu Village Habitation

Improvement Scheme (THAI), the innovative rural infrastructure development scheme focusing on each habitation, has improved amenities in the villages and has greatly benefited them. Water supply, sanitation and upgradation of roads continue to get top priority under this scheme.

34) With 48 percent of the State's population living in urban areas, the challenge of providing civic amenities in these areas is a daunting task. It is the ingenuity and farsightedness of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, which has made it possible to face this challenge by launching the much acclaimed Chennai Mega City Development Mission with an annual allocation of Rs.500 crore and the Integrated Urban Development Mission with an annual allocation of Rs.750 crore. These initiatives have greatly supplemented the available resources of Local Bodies for investment in

infrastructure and provision of basic services. This Government is also seeking support from the World Bank for the Tamil Nadu Sustainable Urban Development Project-IV to give a further boost to urban infrastructure and to enhance execution capacity.

35) Providing adequate potable drinking water to the ever expanding Chennai City is a formidable challenge. The long term strategy of this Government is to add new capacity and improve the existing storage capacity, besides tapping water supply from non-conventional sources including desalination plants. In this regard, the efforts of this Government to establish a new reservoir at Thervaikandigai village, a check dam across the Kosasthalayar river in Thirukandalam and augmenting the existing capacity of storage reservoirs in and around Chennai and the Veeranam lake, will be of great benefit in the long run. It is gratifying

to note that the desalination plants at Minjur and Nemmeli are functioning to full capacity and are adding a capacity of 200 mld together. This is a great relief to the citizens of Chennai. The farsightedness of the Government envisaging to put up a 150 mld plant at Nemmeli and another 400 mld plant in South Chennai, for which project preparation is underway, will significantly augment the drinking water supply in future.

36) Haphazard expansion of urban agglomerations causes growth of slums. The strategies of this Government to address this issue include increasing access to affordable housing for the poor and middle classes, improving the amenities in the existing slums and resettling the families either in-situ or in a better environment. In the last two and a half years this Government has constructed 21,750 units and resettled 7,253 families.

37) I am happy to note that the Chennai Metro Rail Project is progressing well. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has inaugurated the test run of the Metro Rail on 6th November, 2013. So far, an amount of Rs.3,060.74 crore has been provided by the State as share capital and subordinate debt, besides back-to-back loan support of Rs.3,864.83 crore from the Japan International Co-operation Agency. **This Government will ensure faster clearance from the Government of India for the Washermpet to Thiruvottriyur corridor, besides taking up the DPR for Phase II of the project in newly identified corridors.**

38) This Government has successfully implemented the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act since 2011. The gross enrolment in Government schools has substantially

increased in recent years, as a result of the extension of several benefits to students like text books, note books, atlases, maps, school bags, geometry boxes, colour pencils, crayons, footwear, four sets of uniform, bi-cycles, free bus passes, noon-meal, special cash incentive to reduce drop outs at Secondary level and free laptop computers. Of the 51,447 "out of school" children identified, this year 43,838 children have been successfully enrolled in mainstream school education. This was possible due to the novel initiatives of providing escort services, special transport facilities to bring children from remote and tribal habitations to school and enrolment of children of migrant labourers in the nearby Government Schools.

39) Numerous initiatives have been taken to improve the standards of higher education in this State. Setting up of the

Indian Institute of Information Technology and the National Law School in Srirangam constituency and the establishment of several new Arts and Science colleges, Engineering colleges and Polytechnic colleges in backward areas are a few laudable initiatives. When Annamalai University was about to collapse due to mismanagement, this Government took over the reins and appointed an administrator. The Hon'ble Members are well aware that this Government introduced the Annamalai University Bill 2013, which this august House passed subsequently, and I am happy to note that His Excellency, the President of India, has given his assent to the Bill and it has become an Act now. Thus, the glory of the Eighty Four year old institution serving a vast number of youth in the State has been fully restored.

40) Under the cherished vision and charismatic leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Tamil Nadu has emerged as a model State in India in providing comprehensive health care services. The primary and secondary health care services have been expanded significantly. The National Rural Health Mission and the Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project have contributed immensely in achieving higher standards of public health care in the State. Under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, health cover is being provided to 1.29 crore families. This scheme has so far benefited 5,84,554 persons to an extent of Rs.1,255.85 crore. The Government of India has also appreciated the efforts of the State Government in health care, particularly its achievement in reducing the Maternal Mortality Rate and Infant Mortality Rate.

During 2013-2014, the State also received Rs.149.51 crore as the performance linked incentive grant recommended by the Thirteenth Finance Commission.

41) This Government is implementing several programmes for the benefit of socially and economically disadvantaged groups. It is heartening to note that 10,61,561 students belonging to the Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Denotified Communities and Minorities are getting the benefit of Scholarships at a cost of Rs.274.47 crore. The landmark decision to extend the benefit of post-matric scholarship to reimburse tuition fees to Adi-Dravidar and Tribal students studying even in private colleges has created a revolution in education and brought them into the mainstream of higher education. In order to cater to the increased number of students availing of such benefits,

this Government has stepped up the Post-matric scholarship provision for the benefit of students belonging to the Adi-Dravidar and Tribal communities to Rs.936.46 crore in the current fiscal year from the Budget Estimates of Rs.396.88 crore for 2013-2014. I applaud this decision of the Government which has opened up a new window of opportunities to lakhs of poor students belonging to the socially deprived sections of the Society. It is also gratifying to see that substantial investments are being made for improving the hostel facilities for such students, thereby creating a more congenial and enabling environment for their studies.

42) Tamil Nadu is a model welfare State, the envy of other States, with many unique welfare programmes. Our State is always a pioneer in rolling out such programmes which become a precursor for

replication at the National level. Various Social Security Pension schemes are being implemented in the State, providing financial security to over 37 lakh persons, with an assistance of Rs.1,000 per month. Over the years, the allocation towards these schemes has been enhanced to over Rs.4,000 crore per annum by this Government. Marriage assistance programmes, programmes for the welfare of differently abled persons, women and children are some of the laudable initiatives of this Government, which have made the State an outstanding performer in providing welfare support to socially and economically marginalised people.

43) I have broadly outlined the initiatives and policies of this Government. I am fully confident that under the sagacious and visionary leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the State will march forward. I am sure that in the forthcoming session this

House will debate and discuss issues of importance to the State and come out with more initiatives for the upliftment of the people. I conclude my address with my warm New Year greetings once again.

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Vanakkam

Jai Hind