

Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

It gives me great pleasure to address the first session of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly for the year 2005. I take this opportunity to thank you for your warm welcome and assure you of my unstinted support and co-operation in ensuring the rapid development of Tamil Nadu bringing prosperity to the people of this State.

2. The year 2004, that has gone by, is notable for some spectacular triumphs which stand out as shining examples of what can be achieved by sheer determination, true grit and single minded devotion to the task on hand. The elimination of the dreaded bandit Veerappan on 18th October 2004 and the commissioning of the New Veeranam Project to supply water to Chennai City on 31st May 2004 are truly epoch making events over which we can all rejoice.

3. Hon'ble Members of this august House are aware of how the notorious forest brigand Veerappan had

defied State authority questioning the very rationale behind the modern State, not only in Tamil Nadu but also in Karnataka. The Hon'ble Chief Minister Selvi J Jayalalithaa gave a clear mandate to the Special Task Force to get rid of the menace posed by Veerappan and his cohorts. The Chief Minister ensured that the Special Task Force functioned with full authority and freedom as a cohesive force in perfect co-ordination with the counterpart force constituted by the Karnataka Government. This brought to a successful end the decade old manhunt for the desperado Veerappan and his gang. This elimination of Veerappan and his gang was the result of careful intelligence, detailed planning, a proactive approach to win over the tribals as allies in this manhunt and a lot of daring.

4. No praise would be too much for the sustained and determined efforts of the officers and men of the Special Task Force who, sacrificing the comfort and safety of their homes, spent years in thick inhospitable forests in relentless pursuit of the unscrupulous bandit Veerappan and his gang. It is a resounding victory made

doubly praiseworthy considering the fact that Veerappan and his gang had instilled the fear of reprisals among the tribals and carried out brutal killings of the personnel of the Special Task Force and other departments.

5. The Government, under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, did not ever waver in the painstaking pursuit of Veerappan and his gang, placing immense faith in the professionalism and dedication of the Tamil Nadu Police, which is undoubtedly the best Police Force in the country. I congratulate the Special Task Force for scaling the very pinnacle of glory in successfully accomplishing this risky mission, ridding our Society of the murderous menace that had defied a solution all these years, indulging in pillage, destruction, killings and ravaging our priceless rich ecological inheritance. They richly deserve the handsome awards and rewards which the Government has conferred on them in recognition of their valour, dedication and professionalism.

6. As always, this Government has ensured the perfect maintenance of law and order. This

Government has upheld the rule of law and the majesty of law in trying circumstances. The efforts of this Government to modernize and equip the Police Force is symbolised by the construction of a new Office Complex for the Director General of Police at a cost of Rs.30 crores and the construction of a new Police Academy at a cost of Rs.48 crores.

7. Hon'ble Members of the House are aware of the unprecedented failure of the North East Monsoon in 2003, leading to Chennai City's worst ever water crisis. Chennai faced the grim prospect of a total water famine and even evacuation of the population. It redounds to the credit of this Government that this extraordinary water crisis was tackled by a host of measures including the commissioning of the New Veeranam Project in record time, by May 2004, at a cost of Rs.720 crores. The initial supply to the City through the New Veeranam Project was 90 million litres per day, based on borewell water supply from the Panruti aquifer, enabling a total supply of 205 million litres per day to the residents of Chennai with meticulous planning even when the City's reservoirs were

totally dry. When the Chief Minister launched the New Veeranam Project in February 2003, doubts were expressed that it would never succeed. In 2004 it became quite clear that it was this Project which saved Chennai. Efficient distribution by lorries to every street at the specified time every day of the week ensured that the people continued to get basic water supply. The Government undertook this massive and onerous task of distribution through the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board at a cost of Rs.316 crores.

8. After the Veeranam lake received freshes and filled up quickly, the full supply of 180 MLD of water to Chennai City through the New Veeranam Project commenced on 13.10.2004. Even though at this stage Chennai's three reservoirs were still totally dry, piped water supply was resumed from 13.10.2004. This was made possible only because of the full and successful completion of the New Veeranam Project. Higher flows from the Grand Anaicut in the Kollidam river to provide extra storage in the Veeranam lake ensured that in no way were the farmers affected by

the water supply to Chennai City through the New Veeranam Project. The extension project to provide water supply in summer to Chennai City based on collector wells in the Kollidam river bed using the Veeranam Project pipeline will be taken up at a cost of Rs.300 crores, while ensuring that specific steps are taken to protect the agricultural wells in the villages on the banks of the Kollidam river.

9. The Chennai metropolitan area requires a daily water supply of 840 million litres. This has to be met by a combination of sources, namely, the three storage reservoirs in North Chennai, supply from the well fields in North Chennai, Krishna water supply, the New Veeranam Project and a Desalination Project. The Hon'ble Chief Minister Selvi J Jayalalithaa met the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh at Hyderabad on 1.10.2004 and requested him to ensure Krishna Water supply to Chennai City. With this effort, Krishna water was received in Chennai on 28.11.2004. So far, only about 2 TMC ft. of water has been received as against 12 TMC ft. to be realised. It is hoped that the Government

of Andhra Pradesh will provide maximum supply to Chennai City this season from the available storage at Kandaleru reservoir.

10. Hon'ble Members will be glad to know that this Government has taken resolute steps to implement a large Desalination Plant at Chennai on Design, Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (DBOOT) basis and bids are to be received by 16th February 2005. Based on the response, the size of the plant will be finalized. It is the intention of this Government to commission this project in stages commencing from March 2006. This project in conjunction with the New Veeranam Project will go a long way in permanently tackling Chennai City's long term water needs.

11. Even as the people of Tamil Nadu were rejoicing over these spectacular triumphs, the tsunami killer waves struck the Tamil Nadu coast on 26th December 2004 without any forewarning. It was an unprecedented calamity of a type never seen before. The devastation was immense, spread all along the coast,

taking a heavy death toll of 7993 people, rendering lakhs of people homeless and destroying the livelihood of fishermen and others in the coastal areas. Immediately, the Chief Minister rushed to inspect the entire coastal area to assess the extent of damage wrought and organize relief. The services of the Army were requisitioned on the first day itself. This Government has ensured that the relief operations have been organized smoothly in 3 phases, the first phase consisting of search, rescue, evacuation, organising the cremation/burial of the dead and organisation of relief camps; the second phase of providing immediate relief, and the third phase consisting of permanent rehabilitation. The first two phases have been completed and the third phase has just commenced.

12. The tsunami tragedy is the worst ever disaster recorded in history affecting several countries at the same time. While several countries have been struggling to cope with the complex issues to be handled, it is now well recognized that the severe challenge posed by the tsunami tragedy has been handled most effectively by this Government in Tamil Nadu. I have visited

Cuddalore and Nagapattinam and seen for myself the excellent relief work done in a co-ordinated manner.

13. Hon'ble Members are aware that on the instructions of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, teams of officers under the charge of Hon'ble Ministers were rushed to the affected districts. Despite the suddenness of the event, with no forewarning whatsoever, the District Administration in all the affected districts took up the task of providing immediate relief with utmost commitment and dedication. A mammoth operation with the help of sanitary workers drawn from the entire State was launched to retrieve and identify the dead bodies and arrange for the burial or cremation of the dead. This was done speedily and together with the excellent work done by doctors and public health workers the threat of an epidemic was held at bay. Lakhs of men, women and children were housed in relief camps where they were provided with food, water and clothing.

14. In response to the appeal of the Chief Minister, well meaning and public spirited citizens have

contributed generously to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund, besides providing assistance directly to the affected persons, greatly supporting the efforts of the Government to take up immediate relief and rehabilitation of the lakhs rendered homeless and jobless by this calamity. This Government acknowledges with gratitude all those individuals and organizations who have come forward to contribute in cash and in kind and participated in the stupendous task of relief and rehabilitation.

15. The Chief Minister immediately sanctioned ex-gratia relief of Rs.1 lakh to the next of kin of every deceased person from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. The sudden tsunami attack which snatched away both parents left many children orphaned. This Government immediately announced a scheme of deposit of Rs.5 lakhs in the name of every such orphaned child. A deposit of Rs.3 lakhs to benefit every unmarried orphan girl above 18 years has also been announced. Orphanages and service homes for girls have been opened in the tsunami affected districts. Teams of doctors, counsellors and volunteers were mobilized to talk to the affected

persons and instill new confidence in them to restart their lives. These initiatives have greatly helped the process of psychological rehabilitation. Compensation has been provided for loss of limbs and various kinds of injuries sustained by the affected persons.

16. An immediate relief package consisting of 60 kgs of rice, a dhoti and a saree, two bedsheets, 3 litres of kerosene and Rs.4000 in cash, totally amounting to a value of Rs.5000 was given to all families whose houses were affected. The same relief articles and cash of Rs.2000, totalling about Rs.3000 in value were given to each family which suffered loss of livelihood without damage to the house. A massive programme for construction of temporary accommodation for the homeless persons at Rs.8000 per family was taken up and completed. One steel trunk, one Kerosene stove and an eversilver vessel (kudam) are being given to every affected family. A package of assistance at a cost of Rs.65 crores to enable repairs of catamarans, vallams and replacement of fishing nets has been implemented to enable fishermen to get back their livelihood. The

immediate relief programme has been completed quickly, enabling early restoration of some degree of normalcy in the affected areas.

17. The determination and single-minded devotion with which the relief operations were taken up by the Government have received wide spread acclaim, including the appreciation of multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the European Economic Commission. Relief work in the context of a calamity of this nature calls for close co-operation of the State with citizens, volunteer groups and non-Government organisations. This Government has set out a framework for public-private partnerships in this task inviting agencies to join in rebuilding habitations and take up reconstruction of specific assets such as school buildings etc.

18. This Government submitted a detailed memorandum to the Government of India requesting an assistance of Rs.4800 crores and 54000 metric tonnes of rice. This was discussed in a meeting between the

Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Hon'ble Prime Minister at Chennai on 7.1.2005. At this meeting the Chief Minister also emphasized the need for coastal zone protection works through shelter belts and mangroves as also the construction of a sea wall and groyne at a cost of Rs.5000 crores. At this meeting the Chief Minister insisted on the establishment of a tsunami warning system which would at least provide some time to take preventive action. The Prime Minister readily agreed to this suggestion. After announcing an initial advance of Rs.250 crores, the Government of India has recently announced a package of assistance to the State. With this package of assistance, the Government will take up the permanent rehabilitation of all the affected families by way of construction of pucca houses in safe locations and full restoration of livelihood with the replacement of fishing craft and nets. This Government has requested the Government of India for more liberal terms for the replacement of small fishing craft. This Government has also urged the Central Government to announce the waiver of all loans together with accumulated interest in

respect of fishermen due to commercial banks and co-operative banks. We hope more assistance will be provided for taking up the task of livelihood restoration, reconstruction of infrastructure and providing permanent protection works in the coastal zone.

19. The Twelfth Finance Commission has submitted its report in December 2004. Its recommendations are presently under the consideration of the Government of India. The recommendations contained in the report are crucial in determining the size of resource transfers to the States, including Tamil Nadu, during the period 2005-2010. It is hoped that its recommendations will provide more resources to Tamil Nadu enabling the State to go faster forward. The Third State Finance Commission has been constituted to go into the resource transfers to local bodies.

20. Hon'ble Members of the House are well aware of how the entire development effort had been crippled by a most serious fiscal crisis when this Government assumed office. The House may recall that

the approved Annual Plan outlay in 2001-2002 was scaled down from Rs.6040 crores to Rs.5200 crores because of the unprecedented fiscal crisis. This Government has not only restored the fiscal health of the State but also the credibility of the entire development process. I am happy to inform this august House that the approved Annual Plan outlay of Rs.8001 crores for the current financial year will be achieved in full. The Union Government has recognised the excellent management of public finances in the State, by releasing the Fiscal Reform Incentive which is based on the actual fiscal performance, for the fourth year in succession. Tamil Nadu shares this distinction with only a very few other States in the country.

21. This impressive performance has enabled the Hon'ble Chief Minister to go in for a larger Plan outlay in 2005-2006. During the Annual Plan discussions held at New Delhi on 30th November 2004, with the Deputy Chairman of the Union Planning Commission, the Chief Minister secured a record plan outlay of Rs.9100 crores for Tamil Nadu for the year 2005-2006, keeping the State on track to achieve the Tenth Plan outlay

of Rs.40,000 crores. It is heartening to note that Tamil Nadu is back on the high road of accelerated development and high growth, overcoming the fiscal and development crisis which enveloped the State when this Government assumed office.

22. This fiscal recovery has also been made possible by the impressive collection of Commercial Taxes which has recorded a growth of 18% this year. Better mobilisation of resources at the existing rates has been given emphasis. A new “Samadhan” scheme to clear the backlog of property sale cases pending registration and to obtain more revenue has been launched on 28th December 2004.

23. Hon'ble Members of the House are aware of the proposal to introduce a Value Added Tax system to replace State Sales Tax in all States with effect from 1st April 2005. Based on the consensus reached on this issue, the Government proposes to bring forward legislation to implement the Value Added Tax system. This is on the assurance that the compensation for the

consequent revenue losses will be provided by the Government of India as per the agreed formula and the amendments to the Central Sales Tax Act to generate more revenue will be carried out.

24. Hon'ble Members of the House are aware of the internationally accepted "Millennium Development Goals". The Government has taken concerted action to achieve these goals well before the target year of 2015. Good progress has been made in reducing poverty. The percentage of children attending schools in the age group of 6 to 10 years has gone up to 96% in the State and the target percentage of 100 will be reached in the coming year. Access to safe drinking water has been provided to 90% of the population and the Government is on the right track to achieve the target. With the recent interventions of the Government in the Health Care Sector, the State will also achieve the two goals relating to elimination of child malnutrition and reduction in infant mortality rate. A new emphasis on female literacy has been placed to achieve the sixth goal of bridging the gap in the percentage of female literacy with that of male literacy.

25. The seasonal conditions in 2004 have been better than in the last several years. This has led to the forecast of a higher growth in Gross State Domestic Product this year. Hon'ble Members will be happy to know that the Primary Sector including agriculture, which was affected severely by drought in the past, is expected to grow at a rate of more than 16% during the year 2004-2005. It is estimated that the annual production of food grains during 2004-2005 will surpass 90 lakh metric tonnes, including 75 lakh metric tonnes of rice. Hon'ble Members may note that this is a substantial increase over the previous year's total grains production level of 43.12 lakh metric tonnes, including 32.23 lakh metric tonnes of rice. With better seasonal conditions this return to rural prosperity has brought great joy.

26. With a focus on the efficient use of water, innovative precision farming based on the practice in Israel has been introduced in the State as a pilot project in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts. It is proposed to incorporate the experience gained from this project into a major programme. Under the Comprehensive

Wasteland Development Programme 58.35 lakh tree seedlings including fodder slips will be planted this year covering 1.48 lakh acres.

27. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has announced the policy of the Government to promote crop diversification with less water intensive crops such as Jatropha, Sweet Sorghum and Sugar Beet. Corporate houses have been enlisted to promote these crops providing farmers an assured market. The Government is extending extension support to promote these new crops.

28. This Government has provided full support to farmers who have been affected by the continuous drought in the past. Assistance has also been provided to those farmers affected by floods in October-November 2004. The entire co-operative credit structure has been revamped with fresh infusion of funds. Tamil Nadu is one of the few States which has taken up the rescheduling of crop loans together with interest on such loans outstanding to the Co-operative banks as on 31st March, 2004, amounting to Rs.2598 crores to enable farmers to

access fresh credit. This is being rescheduled as a term loan repayable in the next 5 years with a moratorium of 2 years. The interest rate on fresh crop loans has been reduced to 9%. This Government has ensured the payment of all arrears to sugarcane farmers and increased the Statutory Minimum Price for sugarcane from Rs.695 to Rs.730 per metric tonne.

29. Pending clearance of the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Consolidation Project-II, which has been posed to the World Bank, this Government has already started model schemes in selected river basins. The Chief Minister has already taken up with the Union Government the early implementation of the Interlinking of Rivers with specific reference to the Peninsular Grid linking Mahanadhi to Gundar. In spite of the difficulties posed by the Electricity Act 2003, this Government has ensured free electricity for all farm pumpsets and huts. The Government has also sanctioned subsidy for electricity used by domestic consumers at an annual cost of Rs.910 crores. A new initiative has been launched to

support farmers to replace their old inefficient pumpsets with energy efficient pumpsets.

30. Hon'ble Members will be glad to know that the Tamil Nadu Afforestation Project II has been approved at a cost of Rs.567.42 crores by the Japan Bank of International Co-operation. This project will ensure the conservation of natural resources while simultaneously addressing the concerns and needs of the rural population living in habitations adjacent to the forests.

31. 234 veterinary sub centres have been upgraded as full fledged veterinary dispensaries so as to provide better health care for animals. This Government has also ensured that the dairy farmers are helped by an increase in the procurement price of milk by Re.1 per litre from June 2004. I must add that this has been done without putting any extra burden on the consumers.

32. The Government will draw up and implement a new plan for the fisheries sector in the background of the tsunami disaster. The Government has already sanctioned a comprehensive insurance scheme

covering 3.66 lakh fishermen and 78,809 fisherwomen. This Government has always extended great support to fishermen as evidenced by the full waiver of sales tax on diesel used for motors by fishermen despite an annual loss of revenue of Rs.51 crores.

33. Keeping a comprehensive rural development focus including rural employment, this Government has launched a new scheme “Namadhu Gramam” with an outlay of Rs.200 crores to cover all village panchayats. This scheme seeks to achieve 100% enrolment of children in schools, poverty reduction, reduction of infant mortality, elimination of female foeticide, and improved village sanitation - all through people’s participation, besides providing essential infrastructure in all villages.

34. The New Anna Marumalarchi Thittam has made rapid progress. So far 204 projects with an investment of Rs.132.26 crores have been commissioned. 158 projects with a total outlay of Rs.103.32 crores will commence production shortly. 145 more projects at a cost

of Rs.109.70 crores are being processed by financial institutions.

35. The State has performed remarkably well in rural sanitation where the population covered through proper sanitation has improved from 15% in 2001 to more than 43% in the current year. Under the Indira Awas Yojana construction of 37,676 new houses and upgradation of 19,265 kutchha houses with an outlay of Rs.154.31 crores will be completed during 2004-2005.

36. The Self Help Group movement has become very strong. Hon'ble Members will be glad to know that 31.43 lakh women have been enrolled in 1.87 lakh Self Help Groups. These women have mobilised savings of Rs.585.84 crores and they have been provided with credit linkage of Rs.1020.48 crores.

37. The Government has sanctioned an innovative Land Purchase Scheme for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women to give them financial assistance for purchase of land and other agricultural inputs. This scheme will cover 7,000 Scheduled Caste and

Scheduled Tribe families. Commercial banks should fully support this innovative scheme providing the necessary credit linkage.

38. Based on the assurance of the Chief Minister, 49,31,757 applications for ration cards were received, of whom all the 37,70,446 eligible applicants have been given new family ration cards in record time. New ration cards in lieu of the old ration cards will also be distributed by June 2005 and all bogus cards will be weeded out.

39. This Government has placed the greatest emphasis on the improvement of the quality of life of weavers. The massive scheme of distribution of free sarees to 111 lakh women and dhotis to 111 lakh men launched during Pongal 2004 has again been continued in Pongal 2005. This programme not only ensures that the poor get clothes but also provides income security to a large number of weavers. The textile trade has been opened up with the transition to the WTO regime from 1st January 2005. This Government will establish a Task Force to

enumerate the new opportunities and set out an action programme. This Government has sanctioned a comprehensive insurance scheme for 76,096 weavers at a cost of Rs.98.93 lakhs.

40. The Puratchi Thalaivar MGR Nutritious Noon Meal Programme is an idea conceived and executed to perfection in Tamil Nadu with the addition of an egg, potatoes and pulses once a week. The annual commitment under this scheme comes to Rs.844.97 crores as against which the Central Government provides Rs.287.17 crores. The Chief Minister has requested that the Central Government should provide increased assistance for this programme during the Annual Plan discussions on 30th November 2004.

41. The Chief Minister has been in the forefront in leading the movement to enhance the status of the girl child. The outlay for the immensely popular Girl Child Protection Scheme has been increased substantially to cover 23000 girl children. In order to ensure that equal opportunities are available to girl students, the

Government launched a pioneering scheme of providing bi-cycles free of cost to girl students studying in XI and XII classes belonging to Adi Dravidar and Scheduled Tribe Communities. Hon'ble Members will be happy to know that this year 49,194 girl students from Adi Dravidar and Scheduled Tribe families and another 2,96,000 girl students from Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities to whom the scheme has been extended this year are to benefit by this scheme. The Rural Girls Education Incentive Scheme now covers 1,80,000 girls in the 3rd to 6th Standard.

42. For Adi Dravidar students the loan scholarship scheme has been converted to a full grant scheme. Construction of hostel buildings for Adi Dravidars, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities is nearing completion.

43. This Government has given true meaning to the "Education for All" Programme by not only ensuring universal access to primary schools but has

achieved 100% access to middle schools during the current academic year by upgrading 1031 primary schools into middle schools. Hon'ble Members will be glad to know that the Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme with assistance from the World Bank is being implemented at an outlay of Rs.63.21 crores for 11 technical institutions in the State. A programme for translating 32 Law books in Tamil has been launched.

44. A massive programme at a cost of Rs.241.40 crores has been sanctioned to provide infrastructure and facilities in the 3 new medical colleges at Theni, Vellore and at Asaripallam in Kanyakumari district and also existing medical colleges. This will ensure that these institutions will be able to meet the norms prescribed by the Medical Council of India. Hon'ble Members will be glad to know that the massive new twin tower blocks providing 1650 beds at a cost of Rs.104.47 crores at Government General Hospital, Chennai, will be inaugurated shortly. Chennai City has established itself as the "Health Capital of the Country". The World Bank has recently approved the Tamil Nadu

Health Systems Project with an outlay of about Rs.600 crores. Phase II of the Reproductive and Child Health Programme at a cost of Rs.426 crores with support from the World Bank will be launched shortly. Tamil Nadu has made significant strides in rehabilitation of disabled persons. The State has bagged 14 National awards for the welfare of physically challenged people.

45. This Government is implementing a programme of construction of 5172 tenements to rehabilitate slum dwellers in the cities of Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore costing Rs.49 crores. Construction of 10,632 more houses at a cost of Rs.93.20 crores has been taken up and will be completed during this financial year. Structural repairs to existing tenements at a cost of Rs.19 crores have also been taken up to improve the living conditions in existing tenements.

46. This Government has sanctioned 256 Combined Water Supply Schemes to benefit 1.4 crore people living in 15442 rural habitations and 104 towns at an estimated cost of Rs.2172 crores. Hon'ble Members

will be glad to know that during the year 2004-2005, 40 Combined Water Supply Schemes (CWSS) including schemes such as the Sedapatti-Andipatti CWSS, Manaparai-Marungapuri Union CWSS have been completed. The Government has also implemented individual power pump schemes in 16500 rural habitations at an estimated cost of Rs.844 crores. This Government has also sanctioned conversion of 33821 hand pumps into mini power pumps at a cost of Rs.202 crores. The Tamil Nadu Rural Water Supply Project to be funded by the World Bank is in the final stages of preparation.

47. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has announced a Comprehensive Road Infrastructure Development Programme for improvement of State Highways, Major District Roads, other district roads and reconstruction of bridges costing Rs.1050 crores. Works are being taken up under this programme and will be completed by the end of the next financial year. The Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project launched last year by this Government with assistance from the World Bank with a total outlay of Rs.2160 crores is being implemented speedily.

48. Hon'ble Members are aware of the accident near Thiruvarur in December 2003, when the precious life of a girl child was lost due to the poor condition of the bus. This Government immediately launched a programme to completely renovate and repair existing buses and replace old buses on an accelerated basis. Hon'ble Members will be glad to know that the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporations are replacing 1325 buses this year and a further 2000 buses will be replaced during the next financial year. 4,848 defective buses have been repaired at a cost of Rs.30.48 crores to make them road worthy and safe to travel in. This has completely upgraded the services offered by the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporations. All these service improvements have been taken up without any fare revision, despite the impossible burden posed by the steep hike in diesel prices by the Government of India.

49. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has inaugurated on 10th November 2004 the new TICEL Bio-park completed at a cost of Rs.62.50 crores. The Government has requested the Government of India

to locate the proposed Bio-IT park at Chennai. Following the announcement of the New Industrial Policy in 2003, and the subsequent improvement in the investment climate, several new investment proposals are being finalised.

50. The Chief Minister's vision of making Chennai and Tamil Nadu the destination of choice for IT and IT Enabled Services is being realized as evidenced by the recent studies of NASSCOM and Messrs Gartner. Large international companies and banks have found Chennai the most convenient location. Indian IT majors are all expanding in Chennai in a big way. The Knowledge Industry Township will be established soon. Leading to it will be the 6 lane IT Expressway which will be built before the end of December 2005.

51. 6275 temples in Adi Dravidar colonies have been taken up for renovation at a cost of Rs.15.69 crores. For the benefit and convenience of pilgrims going to the Palani temple, a new Rope Car

service has been inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on 3.11.2004.

52. This Government has taken up a package of measures to revitalise the film industry in the State including legislation to curb video piracy. The Government has modified the entire structure of Entertainment Tax and the tax rate has also been reduced. The Government has increased the subsidy for each quality low budget film from Rs.5 lakhs to Rs.7 lakhs with effect from 2003. The charges for film shooting at Government sites have been reduced. The Hon'ble Chief Minister presented awards to film artistes and technicians on 3rd December 2004. The film industry has received a new lease of life with these measures.

53. Good governance incorporating innovative e-governance initiatives continues to be a focus area. The new district of Krishnagiri has been launched as the 30th district in Tamil Nadu by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on 9th February 2004.

54. I have set out in detail the policies and programmes of this Government. We can justifiably be proud of the spectacular achievements of this Government in 2004 and look forward to an excellent performance in all spheres in 2005. I hope that the deliberations in this House will be balanced, constructive and purposive, all with the objective of ensuring accelerated development bringing prosperity to the people of Tamil Nadu.

Vanakkam.

Jai Hind.