

Farmers bodies flay DMK for failing to fulfil election promise on hiking procurement price of sugarcane, paddy

Agriculture Budget criticised for lack of initiatives to ensure remunerative prices for farm produce

February 20, 2024 06:06 pm | Updated 06:06 pm IST - THIRUCH

'Sanatana dharma like malaria, dengue...': MK Stalin's son Udhayanidhi sparks row

Udhayanidhi Stalin, the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, triggered a row when he linked Sanatana dharma with "malaria" and "dengue" while calling for its eradication.

Udhayanidhi Stalin's Comments Against 'Sanatana Dharma' Amount To Hate Against Specific Community : Madras High Court

Abandonment of Aspirations by the DMK

A Tale of Corruption and Neglect

Tamil Nadu
Micro & small industries to go on strike in Tamil Nadu

Small industries alleged that fixed charges, especially for the low-tension (LT) connections, increased last year and hampered their activity and profit margin significantly.

Demolished century-old temples in my constituency: DMK MP in now-viral speech

"I demolished them knowing that I wouldn't get the votes. But I also knew how to get the votes," the MP reportedly is heard saying in the clip.

Tamil Nadu
Tamil Nadu tops country in murders of senior citizens

Sanatan Dharma row: Hindu saints protest Udhayanidhi Stalin's remarks, burn effigies at Tamil Nadu bhawan

Protesters also raised slogans against political leaders who made similar remarks and raised statements supporting the DMK leader



FIR filed against Udhayanidhi Stalin in Mumbai over his 'Sanatana Dharma' remark

September 13, 2023 11:26 am | Updated 01:00 pm IST - Mumbai:

Mumbai's Mira Road police have registered the case under sections 153 A and 295 A of IPC

ANI



Udhayanidhi Stalin के सनातन धर्म के विरोध बयान को लेकर Jantar Mantar पर Protest

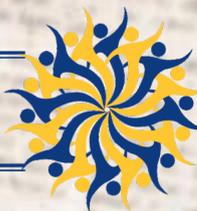
सनातन धर्म विरोधी बयान को लेकर युवा गुर्जर मंच ने किया प्रदर्शन, महिलाएं व बच्चे समेत हाथों में पोस्टर बैनर के साथ पहुंचे थे

तारा खन्ने राजनीति

By Indinews Line — Last updated Sep 28, 2023



लोक नीति शोध केन्द्र



PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE

Abandonment of Aspirations by the DMK:

A Tale of Corruption and Neglect



Public Policy Research Centre

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
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Table of Contents

PREFACE	06
1. Historical Background	07
2. Tamil Nadu's Economic Struggles and NDA's Infrastructure Support	11
3. Agriculture's Downfall in Tamil Nadu under DMK	21
4. Ailing Healthcare System	31
5. Plummeting Quality of Education	38
6. Meteoric Rise in Corruption	43
7. Anti-Sanatan Politics and Worsening Law & Order in Tamil Nadu	47

PREFACE

In recent times, Tamil Nadu has found itself embroiled in a tumultuous state of affairs under the governance of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government. This report delves into the multifaceted challenges that have beset the state across various domains, shedding light on the concerning trends and systemic issues that demand urgent attention.

At the forefront of our analysis is the palpable erosion of Tamil Nadu's cultural and historical fabric, exacerbated by what can only be described as anti-Sanatana politics. The DMK government's actions have sparked widespread dismay among the populace, with instances of temple demolitions and derogatory attacks on Sanatana Dharma, casting a shadow over the state's cultural landscape. Such divisive rhetoric, epitomized by recent remarks from prominent political figures, underscores the urgent need to safeguard Tamil Nadu's rich heritage and foster a climate of inclusivity and harmony.

Economic turmoil looms large over Tamil Nadu, once hailed as a bastion of industrial prowess and economic prosperity. However, under the current administration, the state's infrastructure has faltered, grappling with dwindling growth rates, declining foreign investment, and mounting debts. Industrial unrest further underscores the disconnect between policy formulation and ground realities, necessitating a concerted effort to revitalize the state's economic landscape and reignite its growth trajectory.

The agricultural sector, a cornerstone of Tamil Nadu's economy, has also been marred by mismanagement and unfulfilled promises. From the historical mismanagement of water resources to deceptive electoral manoeuvres, farmers continue to bear the brunt of systemic failures and policy shortcomings. Urgent measures are imperative to address the pressing challenges facing the agricultural sector and ensure the livelihoods of Tamil Nadu's farming community are safeguarded.

Furthermore, issues plaguing the healthcare sector and rampant corruption cases further underscore the need for a comprehensive overhaul of governance structures and policy frameworks. The decline in healthcare expenditure, coupled with poor infrastructure and diminishing quality of education, poses significant challenges to the well-being of Tamil Nadu's populace. Moreover, the spectre of corruption looms large, casting a shadow over the state's political landscape and eroding public trust in governance institutions.

As we navigate the complex landscape of contemporary Tamil Nadu, it is imperative to confront these challenges head-on and chart a path towards inclusive growth and sustainable development. This report, prepared by the Public Policy Research Centre (PPRC), serves as a clarion call to action, urging stakeholders to unite in their efforts to address systemic issues and pave the way for a brighter future for Tamil Nadu and its people

Dr Sumeet Bhasin

Director
Public Policy Research Centre

I. Historical Background

The history and culture of Tamil Nadu are being targeted and the literary genius of Tamil saints and poets is at risk. The people of Tamil Nadu are in great despair with the Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government single-handedly causing polarization in the state. Razing down of centuries-old temples, casting derogatory attacks on Sanatana Dharma, curbing the celebration of Hindu festivals, and ultimately attempting to reduce the Hindu population in the state to the status of second-class citizens – are all issues that have emerged time and again under the DMK government.

The problem in the political landscape of Tamil Nadu is not new, it has existed for quite some time now. Right from a secessionist ideology to celebrity, money and power-dependent politics, political ambitions have often overridden the basic purpose of politics, i.e., the upliftment of the weak and development of all without hampering the age-old culture and tradition of the people.

The DMK regime has flawed time and again on all these parameters. They have perpetually involved themselves in anti-Sanatana activities hands in glove with lobbies and pressure groups from the minority section, pushing Tamil Nadu down the dark road of anti-development for the fulfilment of unscrupulous interests. To look at the inherent problems in the



Ranganathaswamy Temple, Tamil Nadu

political landscape and age-old Hindu hatred practised by DMK, we need to delve into history to examine not only the cultural heritage and grand legacy of Tamil Nadu but also a systematic project that has been deliberately undertaken by the current ruling political party and allied ideologues to destroy the cultural fabric and heritage of the state, transforming the entire political landscape into a minority appeasement arena in lieu of vote-bank consolidation.

We further need to understand that while votes are necessary in electoral democracies, the DMK does it at the cost of derailment of development projects and creation of a rift in society between various sections by politicizing and polarizing identity.

Historical background

Tamil Nadu has the highest number of Hindu temples in India, with a majority of them being hundreds of years old, built by various rulers and nobles who once controlled various parts of the modern state of Tamil Nadu. The temples are not only religious places of worship but are architectural marvels with their beautiful gopurams and sculptures. The state has also given birth to numerous saints who have gone on to preach the gospel

of equality and propagate Sanatana Dharma. The 12 Alvars and 63 Nayanars were the founders of the first Bhakti Movement, who sang hymns in praise of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. The Alvars and the Nayanars belonged to various social backgrounds and came from different and diverse walks of life. While some came from Brahmin families, many also belonged to the backward sections of society including Panar and Pulaiyar, together preaching the imperative value of equality over caste-based domination. They played a pivotal role in enabling access of all to devotion irrespective of any discrimination. The works of these great Tamil saints are an inalienable part of Tamil literature and culture. The state of Tamil Nadu also gave birth to remarkable kings and able administrators, who were patrons of art, culture and literature, and promoted the sculpting and construction of magnificent temples, which not only served as places of worship but also as a place of congregational activities and solidarity.

Temples were the fulcrum of the Tamil society around which all other activities were based. For instance, the Brihadeshwara Temple on the banks of river Cauvery in Thanjavur, built by one of the greatest rulers in Indian history - Rajaraja Chola, is a fine example of an architectural marvel and culture that has been intricately woven into the social fabric of Tamil Nadu for centuries now. The Brihadeshwara temple is a symbol of Tamil pride, and houses one of the largest Shiva Lingams in the country in a temple fully made of granite with pillars producing musical notes - this stands as a testimony to the engineering marvel, and calibre displayed by Tamil rulers over 1000 years ago in 1010 CE.¹ Another such temple is the Ranganathaswamy temple, situated in Srirangam, and is one of the 108 Divyadesams glorified by the Alvars in their canon, the Naalayira Divya Prabhandam.

The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is one of the largest temple complexes in the world. It follows the Tenkalai tradition of Sri Vaishnavism. This temple finds mentions in Sanskrit texts like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Padma Purana, Brahmanda Purana, and Garuda Purana, apart from

The Tamil Nadu of today is marked with political violence, social stratification, and elitism - much different to the aspirations and vision of great Tamil rulers and reformers, which form the core of Tamil Nadu's tradition and culture.

finding key mentions in Tamil literature of the Sangam era like Akananuru, Purananuru, and Silapadikaram. The temple is only one out of 108 Divyadesams² to be dedicated to a total of 247 pasurams or divine hymns by all the Alvars and has been recognized as a site of immense significance by Acharayas of various schools of thought despite affiliations. The temple also houses the holy mortal remains of Sri Ramanujacharya, one of the greatest social reformers in India's rich history who preached the gospel of equality and has the statue of equality dedicated to him, recently inaugurated in Telangana by the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi.³

Sri Ramanujacharya⁴ was born in 1011 CE in Sriperambadur and is widely acknowledged and revered across the globe for his free-thinking, egalitarian thought, and social reforms. He was a foremost leader of the Bhakti movement and the first of his time to counter social stratification and caste-based discrimination. He not only embraced the downtrodden and treated them on an equal par with the ruling elite but also granted them entry into temples, gave them important positions in temple management and promoted his belief

that God is of everyone and no one should be kept away from devotion. He also fueled social reform by naming the then untouchables as Thirukullathar or the 'born divine', this led to a change in people's outlook and mindsets. He travelled across India, even to one of the oldest cities of the world - Kashi, and the snow-capped mountains of Kashmir where he got rare manuscripts of Bodhayana Vritii Grantha on Brahma Sutras and this was



The mismanaged 1000 year-old Naganathasamy temple

while he was working on the Sri Bhasya. Upon completion, he returned to the valley and dedicated his work to the Maa Sharda shrine in Kashmir. He is the epitome of oneness and universal brotherhood, and the embodiment of 'Vasudeva Kutumbakam' and connected Kashmir in the north, to Tamil Nadu in the south. This philosophy has been evident in the practice and governance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, as well.

Ramanujacharya, much contrary to the current DMK regime, also ensured the interests of the female community and worked hard to make a just and fair society that would treat women equally and grant them access to places of worship and education. Over a thousand years ago, a Tamil saint had the power and charisma to drive such social change that is still on the manifestos of political parties. This is a testimony to the fact that the Tamil society, while deeply rooted in culture, tradition, and customs, was a free-thinking, liberal, and progressive society, serving as an inspiration to societies across the globe, and is doing so even to this day. However, despite such developments, most governments of the past and especially the DMK have ignored the architectural marvels and social reformers alike. The Tamil Nadu of today is marked with political violence, social stratification, and elitism much different to the aspirations and vision of great Tamil rulers and reformers.

DMK's Dynasty Politics Hampering Tamil Nadu's Growth

Meritocracy is the cornerstone of a thriving democracy, ensuring that individuals are selected and promoted based on their abilities, skills, and accomplishments rather than factors like family lineage or political connections. In a meritocratic system, talent and hard work are rewarded, leading to innovation, efficiency, and overall societal progress. However, in Tamil Nadu, the dominance of the DMK, marked by its reliance on dynasty politics, has hindered the state's true potential. By perpetuating a system where political positions are often inherited rather than earned, the DMK has stifled opportunities for deserving individuals outside of political dynasties. This has led to a lack of fresh perspectives, innovation, and competent leadership in key sectors, ultimately impeding the state's development.

DMK has once again come at the very top in terms of fielding family members for the

2024 Lok Sabha elections from Tamil Nadu. The list of candidates includes Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, Dayanidhi Maran, Thamizhachi Thangapandian, Kalanidhi Veeraswamy, Arun Nehru and DM Kathir Anand.⁵

Kanimozhi Karunanidhi is the daughter of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK ideologue M. Karunanidhi, and Dayanidhi Maran is the son of former Union Minister Murasoli Maran and the grandnephew of M. Karunanidhi. Apart from them, while Thamizhachi is the daughter of former DMK minister V. Thangapandian and elder sister of Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu, Kalanidhi is the son of DMK veteran, Arcot N Veeraswamy, Arun Nehru is the son of Municipal Administration Minister K N Nehru, and DM Kathir Anand is the son of DMK general secretary Durai Murugan.

In a recent event, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, replying to an observation made by the Prime Minister pertaining to the dynastic politics in the state, admitted DMK's political structure and said, "Yes, this is a family rule," before going on to justify that his family rule was meant for the development of the state.⁶

If Tamil Nadu continues down the path of dynastic politics perpetuated by the DMK, the state's growth prospects are bleak. The concentration of power within political families stifles meritocracy and innovation, limiting opportunities for capable individuals outside of dynasties. As seen in the lineup of candidates for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, familial ties continue to dominate the political landscape, further entrenching the grip of dynasty politics. Without a shift towards merit-based leadership and governance, Tamil Nadu risks stagnation and underdevelopment, as the state's resources and potential remain untapped under the shadow of familial rule. It is imperative for the state to break free from the shackles of dynastic politics and embrace a system where leadership is earned through merit and competence, ensuring a brighter and more inclusive future for Tamil Nadu.



II. Tamil Nadu's Economic Struggles and NDA's Infrastructure Support

In the early 1960s, Tamil Nadu was grappling with daunting challenges, marked by widespread poverty and sluggish economic growth. Tamil Nadu, once hailed as a beacon of industrial growth and infrastructure development, finds itself struggling with a myriad of challenges that have hindered its progress under the governance of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government.

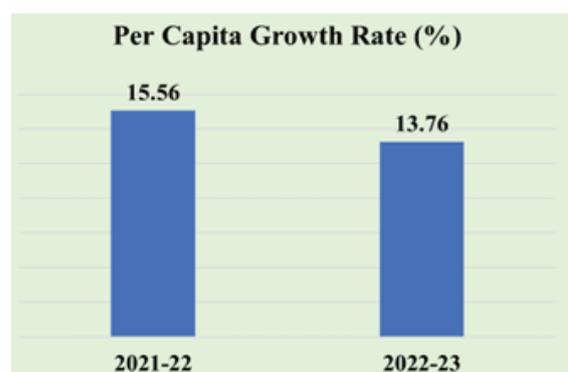
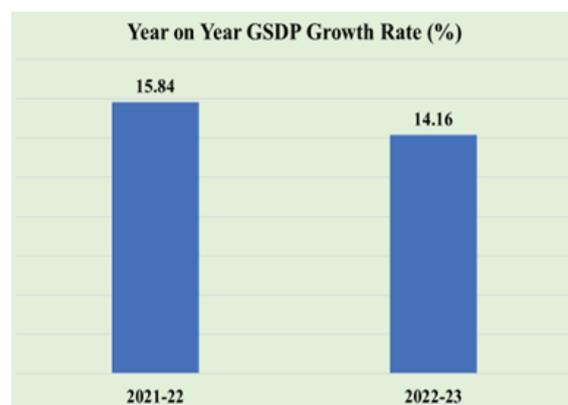
The state's infrastructure, once considered a pillar of its economic prosperity, has witnessed a concerning decline marked by dwindling growth rates, plummeting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and mounting debts. Industrial strikes and unrest further highlight the deep-seated grievances among the populace, underscoring the disconnect between the DMK government's policies and the ground reality faced by micro and small-scale industries. As we delve into an analysis of Tamil Nadu's infrastructure landscape, it becomes evident that urgent measures are needed to address the systemic issues plaguing the state's development trajectory and revive its once-flourishing infrastructure sector.

Declining Growth Rates

In 2021, with the DMK government coming to power, the year-on-year growth rate of GSDP at current prices in Tamil Nadu has declined. This growth rate then declined to 14.16% in 2022-23 from 15.8% in 2021-22, marking a decrease of 1.68 points from the previous year.

In recent developments, Uttar Pradesh has overtaken Tamil Nadu to become the second-largest state economy, leading to criticisms aimed at the DMK administration. The average growth rate of Tamil Nadu's GSDP stood at 15% between 2021-22 and 2022-23, while Uttar Pradesh's average growth rate during the same period was 17.17%. This indicates a pattern that the growth rates of Tamil Nadu have been stagnating and declining, leading to the interpretation that the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh is delivering better performance compared to the DMK government in Tamil Nadu⁷.

The growth rate of Per Capita Net State Domestic Product at Current Prices was 15.56% in 2021-22, which subsequently declined to 13.75% in 2022-23, marking a decrease of 1.81 points. This decline in growth trends under the DMK



regime suggests a downward trend in economic performance during this period.⁸

Decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

In the fiscal year 2022-23, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into Tamil Nadu experienced almost one-third decline (27.7%), dropping from approximately US\$3 billion in 2021-22 to around US\$2.16 billion. This trend continued into 2023-24 (April-December), with FDI inflows further decreasing to US\$1.7 billion, representing a 21.29% decline compared to the previous period. In contrast, Gujarat, a state with similar area (size) and population, experienced a significant increase in FDI inflows, jumping by 114.81% to US\$5.8 billion in 2023-24 from US\$2.70 billion in 2021-22.⁹



Despite witnessing a rise in total fresh investments during fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023, Tamil Nadu experienced a decrease in its share of total investments from 9.57% in FY2021 to 4.69% in FY2023. Consequently, the state's ranking dropped from No. 2 in FY2021 to No. 8 in FY2023. This could mean a number of things for Tamil Nadu, but the most obvious one could be that there is degradation in the ease of doing business, which usually leads to decline in foreign investments. Unstable government is another factor which leads to a decline in FDI.

Decline in Sectoral Contribution

The share of agriculture in the state's GDP decreased significantly from 24.57% in the 1980s to 12.18% in 2021-22 and further to 11.73% in 2022-23. However, despite this decline, about 60% of the population still relies directly or indirectly on agriculture, indicating the continued importance of this sector. However, the state's agriculture sector faces challenges, including a decline in the contribution of agriculture to GDP and the percentage of the population dependent on agriculture. The declining trend in agriculture productivity, particularly in major crops like paddy, millets, pulses, and oilseeds, has contributed to this challenge. For example, the growth rate of paddy production decreased from 4.82% to 1.90% in the 1990s. Similarly, the growth rates of millets, pulses, and oilseeds became negative during this period.

While agriculture remains significant, the services sector has emerged as a major contributor to Tamil Nadu's economy, accounting for 50.94% of the GDP in 2021-22 and 50.92% in 2022-23.

Mounting Debts

The total outstanding liabilities of Tamil Nadu under the AIADMK government in the fiscal year 2020-21 amounted to Rs 5.68 lakh crore. However, within a span of just two years, under the governance of the DMK party, this figure surged significantly, reaching Rs 8.34 lakh crore by the fiscal year 2023-24. This increase amounted to a substantial Rs 2.66 lakh crore within this short timeframe. Such a notable rise in outstanding liabilities underscores the fiscal challenges faced by the state during this period. It suggests a

significant expansion in borrowing or other forms of financial obligations undertaken by the government to meet its expenditure or investment requirements. The implications of this sharp increase in liabilities would likely have implications for the state's fiscal health, necessitating prudent financial management strategies to ensure sustainable economic growth and stability.¹⁰

In the fiscal year 2023-24, Tamil Nadu's state government faced significant fiscal challenges despite efforts to manage fiscal deficits. The state relies on borrowing from the market through the issuance of bonds known as State Development Loans (SDLs) to bridge the income-expenditure gap, with SDLs forming a major part of its total outstanding liabilities. Out of the total outstanding liabilities of Rs 8.34 lakh crore in 2023-24, internal debt accounted for Rs 6.45 lakh crore, while loans from the central government constituted Rs 58,000 crores, and SDLs amounted to Rs 6 lakh crore¹¹.

Despite efforts to control fiscal deficits, they exceeded the 3% limit set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act. In 2022-23, the fiscal deficit was within the permissible limit at 3%, but it increased to 3.25% in 2023-24. Similarly, the revenue deficit also escalated from 1.23% in 2022-23 to 1.33% in 2023-24.¹² These trends indicate the challenges faced by the state government in maintaining fiscal discipline while addressing its expenditure needs and developmental priorities. Such deviations from fiscal targets underscore the importance of implementing effective fiscal management strategies to ensure long-term economic stability and sustainability.

Allocation of funds from the Centre

Under the leadership of PM Shri Narendra Modi, states have witnessed a substantial increase in financial assistance over the past decade. Under his leadership over the past decade, the financial allocation from the Centre to Tamil Nadu has surged significantly, exceeding 2.5 times the amount allocated in the preceding decade before 2014. This heightened financial allocation has translated into tangible improvements across various sectors in Tamil Nadu.¹³

Over the past nine years, the central government has allocated a larger amount of funds to Tamil Nadu through tax devolution than what the state contributed in direct taxes. Following the guidelines set forth by the Union Finance Commission, Tamil Nadu received a total of Rs 2.88 lakh crore as tax devolution from the fiscal year 2014-15 up to 2023-24. Additionally, within the same period, the state was granted Rs 2.58 lakh crore in the form of grants-in-aid by the Union government. Contrastingly, Tamil Nadu's contribution to direct taxes, including income tax and corporate tax, from the period spanning 2014 to 2022-23 stands at Rs 6.23 lakh crore. This indicates significant financial support provided by the central government to Tamil Nadu, surpassing the amount collected through direct taxes from the state.

In addition to the allocations recommended by the Finance Commission, the Union government, under the directives of PM Shri Narendra Modi, has provided Rs 6,412 crore as special assistance for capital infrastructure projects. This initiative aims to support the development of crucial infrastructure in the region. Notably, this amount comes with a unique repayment scheme, allowing Tamil Nadu to reimburse it over 50 years without incurring any interest charges. This move underscores the government's commitment to

fostering long-term growth and development in the state, aligning with the vision set forth by PM Shri Narendra Modi.

When considering all these funding sources combined, Tamil Nadu has accumulated a total of Rs 6.96 lakh crore in financial assistance from the central government. This comprises the allocations recommended by the Finance Commission, special assistance for capital infrastructure, and grants-in-aid.

Devolution of Shareable Taxes and Duties to Tamil Nadu

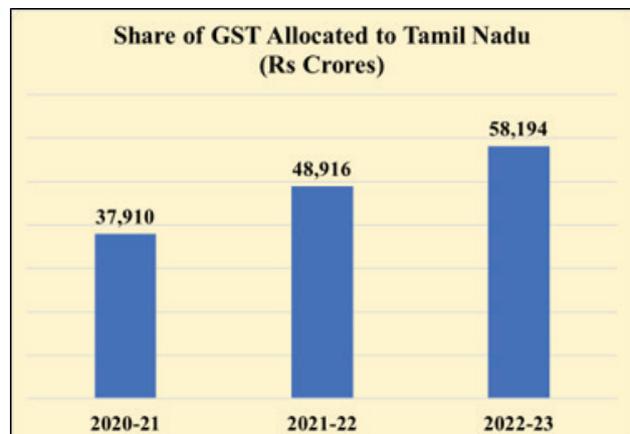
Under the leadership of PM Shri Narendra Modi, the central government has demonstrated a commitment to equitable distribution of resources to Tamil Nadu through the devolution of shareable taxes and duties. Over three fiscal years, there has been a notable increase in the allocation of funds to the state. In the financial year 2020-21, Tamil Nadu received Rs 24,924.51 crores, which experienced a significant surge to Rs 37,458.6 crores in 2021-22. This substantial increment continued into the following fiscal year, with Tamil Nadu's allocation reaching Rs 38,731.24 crores in 2022-23. Such



consistent increments reflect the central government's dedication to fostering economic development and ensuring financial stability in Tamil Nadu. These allocations play a pivotal role in supporting the state's various developmental initiatives, thereby contributing to its overall growth and prosperity.¹⁴ Yet, Tamil Nadu's DMK government has been complaining about not receiving enough tax revenues, showcasing their anti-unitary and anti-development psyche.¹⁵

Share of Goods and Services Tax (GST) Allocated to Tamil Nadu

The Union government has allocated significant amounts to Tamil Nadu through various sources, including GST, cess, and surcharges. In the fiscal year 2022-23, Tamil Nadu received substantial amounts under different categories of GST. Specifically, the state obtained Rs 36,353 crore rupees under State GST, Rs 32,611 crore under Integrated GST (IGST), and Rs 27,360 crore under Central GST. It's worth noting that states receive 100% of the collection made under State GST, 50% under iGST, and 41% under Central GST, as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission. Moreover, from the fiscal year 2014-15 to 2023-24, Tamil Nadu received a total of Rs 57,557 crore as cess. Out of this sum, allocations were made for various developmental projects.



Under the leadership of PM Shri Narendra Modi, the central government's allocation

of Goods and Services Tax (GST) to Tamil Nadu has seen a consistent upward trend over the past three fiscal years. In the financial year 2020-21, Tamil Nadu received Rs 37,910 crores from the central government as its share of GST. This amount increased to Rs 48,916 crores in 2021-22, reflecting a substantial rise in allocation. Continuing this positive trajectory, in 2022-23, Tamil Nadu's share of GST surged further to Rs 58,194 crores. Such consistent increments signify the central government's commitment to fostering economic growth and development in Tamil Nadu, contributing to the state's financial stability and facilitating its various developmental initiatives. These allocations not only reflect a proactive approach towards fiscal decentralization but also highlight the collaborative efforts between the central and state governments in ensuring equitable distribution of resources for the betterment of Tamil Nadu's citizens.¹⁶

Industrial Strikes

Tamil Nadu stands as the fourth largest state in India, having a diverse and robust manufacturing sector. It holds a prominent position in various industries such as automobiles, auto components, engineering, pharmaceuticals, garments, textiles, leather, chemicals, and plastics. With the highest number of factories and industrial workers in the country, Tamil Nadu ranks second in industrialization after Maharashtra. It is home to the largest number of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and factories in India, with 38,837 factories, surpassing even Gujarat.

Despite Tamil Nadu's impressive economic achievements and industrial prowess, the occurrence of frequent strikes under the rule of the DMK government raises concerns and highlights underlying issues within the state's industrial landscape. Strikes and labour disputes can disrupt economic activities, impact industrial productivity, and create instability in the business environment.

Strike at Apple Supplier Flex -The strike at the manufacturing plant of Apple supplier Flex in Tamil Nadu sheds light on the labour issues prevailing under the DMK rule in the state. The strike, initiated by hundreds of workers demanding higher wages and the recognition of a union, underscores broader concerns within India's electronics manufacturing sector regarding labour rights and union representation.

Apple Manufacturer Flex's Workers Stage Strike At Tamil Nadu Plant: Report

Hundreds of employees at a manufacturing facility in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, operated by Flex, a prominent Apple supplier, held a one-day strike on Friday, the media has reported.

Despite the DMK government's emphasis on social welfare and inclusive growth, the strike at Flex reflects the challenges workers face in securing fair wages and working

conditions. The reluctance of management to recognize the workers' union and address their grievances highlights a disconnect between labour policies and ground realities.

Furthermore, the strike adds to a series of labour disputes at Apple suppliers in India, including previous incidents at Foxconn and Wistron plants, indicating systemic issues within the electronics manufacturing sector. These incidents underscore the urgent need for greater labour rights and protections, ensuring the welfare and well-being of workers in Tamil Nadu's industrial landscape.

While the strike's outcome remains uncertain, it highlights the growing discontent among workers and the imperative for the government to prioritize labour reforms and address the root causes of labour unrest.

Strikes by Micro and small-scale industries - Micro and small-scale industries in Tamil Nadu have initiated a shutdown of their operations to protest against various issues, including peak-hour electricity charges and fixed charges on power load, highlighting the challenges faced by these sectors under the DMK government's rule. Despite Chief Minister MK Stalin's efforts to address grievances by announcing measures like cuts in fixed charges and slight reductions in peak-hour tariffs, industry representatives feel their demands have not been adequately met. This situation reflects a disconnect between the government's policies and the needs of the industrial sector.

Tamil Nadu

Micro & small industries to go on strike in Tamil Nadu

Small industries alleged that fixed charges, especially for the low-tension (LT) connections, increased last year and hampered their activity and profit margin significantly.

The formation of the Tamil Nadu Industrial Electricity Consumers' Federation, comprising over 250 industrial bodies and associations, demonstrates the widespread discontent among industrial stakeholders. The participation of more than 8 lakh industrial units in the strike, representing various sectors including automobile, textiles, and leather industries, underscores the magnitude of the issue and its impact on the state's economy.

The Federation's readiness to explore further actions, including a prolonged strike, if their demands are not met, indicates growing frustration and disillusionment with the government's response. These developments underscore the urgent need for policy reforms and proactive measures to support the growth and sustainability of micro and small-scale industries in Tamil Nadu. Failure to address these concerns could have detrimental effects on industrial output, employment, and overall economic development in the state under the DMK government's administration.

Centre's Assistance for Infrastructure Development in Tamil Nadu

PM Shri Narendra Modi has given the immense importance of prioritizing Tamil Nadu's development on the national agenda. Over the past three years, from 2020-21 to 2022-23, the central government has demonstrated its commitment by allocating Rs 3096 crores for the enhancement of National Highways. This investment has resulted in a significant expansion of the national highway network, which grew from 4975 km in 2014 to 7000 km in 2023, indicating an addition of 2025 km under PM Modi's leadership. In contrast, between 2004 and 2013, only 760 km were added under the UPA government¹⁷.

Additionally, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Tamil Nadu has received Rs 2,428.93 crores. This allocation has led to the completion of 12,511.095 km of roads in the last decade, significantly improving connectivity. Notably, the scheme has also facilitated the construction of 131 bridges, addressing critical infrastructure gaps¹⁸. Furthermore, the investment in highway development and maintenance in the state has seen a remarkable increase, from around Rs 1,200 crore in 2014-15 to over Rs 8,200 crore in 2022-23¹⁹.

During the tenure of Shri Narendra Modi, the state has seen significant advancements in its railway infrastructure. This includes the implementation of 1,300 km-long rail projects, electrification of 2,000 km of railway lines, and the introduction of five Vande Bharat trains. Additionally, numerous railway stations across the state have undergone upgrades, further enhancing the overall railway infrastructure and services available to the people of Tamil Nadu. These initiatives underscore the commitment of the BJP government towards modernizing and improving the railway network in the state, contributing to its overall development and connectivity.

PM Shri Narendra Modi in February 2024 inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for multiple development projects in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, collectively valued at Rs. 17,300 crores. These projects signify the essence of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat,' highlighting unity and excellence across the nation.

One significant initiative is the establishment of an Outer Harbor Container Terminal at V O Chidambaranar Port, aimed at elevating the port's status as a transshipment hub for the East Coast. Moreover, Thoothukudi is set to become India's first Green Hydrogen Hub Port, incorporating a desalination plant, hydrogen production facilities, and bunkering infrastructure, marking a remarkable shift towards sustainable energy solutions.

Furthermore, the launch of India's inaugural indigenous green hydrogen fuel cell inland waterway vessel under the Harit Nauka initiative represents a crucial step towards embracing clean energy alternatives.

Alongside these endeavors, Prime Minister Modi also dedicated rail projects, including the doubling of the Vanchi Maniyachchi - Nagercoil rail line, and four road projects in Tamil Nadu, totaling approximately Rs. 4,586 Crore. These projects aim to enhance connectivity, shorten travel times, and foster socio-economic development in the region, demonstrating the government's commitment to infrastructure enhancement and sustainable growth.²⁰

Since the inception of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana until the present, the central government has disbursed a total of Rs 17,205.89 Crores to Tamil Nadu. This substantial financial allocation has facilitated the construction of a remarkable 11,04,728 houses

across the state. These numbers underscore the significant impact of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in Tamil Nadu, demonstrating the government's commitment to addressing housing needs and improving living conditions for its citizens.²¹ | ²²

Before the initiation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, access to tap water supply was limited in Tamil Nadu, with only 21,76,071 households, constituting approximately 17.37% of the households, having such access. However, following the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, there was a significant improvement in water infrastructure and accessibility. The total number of households with tap water supply surged to 1,02,51,292, representing an impressive coverage of 81.86% of households. This indicates the substantial impact of the Jal Jeevan Mission in Tamil Nadu, leading to a considerable enhancement in the provision of clean and safe drinking water to a vast majority of the population.²³

These allocations demonstrate the Union government's commitment to supporting Tamil Nadu's development across various sectors, including infrastructure and rural development. As a result, numerous families in Tamil Nadu have benefitted from essential amenities and services provided by the Centre, including facilities such as pucca houses, and piped water. These initiatives reflect the substantial investments made by the Centre to uplift the standard of living and enhance infrastructure development in Tamil Nadu during the BJP's tenure.

Relief Funds by the Centre

In December 2023, Tamil Nadu experienced heavy rainfall, leading to significant flooding in parts of Chennai and its surrounding areas. This flooding was attributed to Cyclone Michaung, which struck the region early in the month. The Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) visited the affected areas to assess the damages caused by both the cyclone and the subsequent floods.

The IMCT's visits to Tamil Nadu occurred in two phases: from the 11th to the 14th of December 2023, they assessed the areas affected by Cyclone Michaung, and from the 19th to the 22nd of December 2023, they evaluated the flood-stricken regions caused by heavy rainfall. Additionally, another visit was conducted from the 11th to the 14th of January 2024 to further evaluate the damages caused by the floods in southern Tamil Nadu.

In response to these disasters, the Government of Tamil Nadu submitted memoranda seeking financial assistance. The Central Government released Rs. 900 crores as the central share of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to aid in relief efforts for the affected areas. Furthermore, the State Government reported that there was Rs. 813.15 crore available in the SDRF account as of 1st April 2023, before the occurrences of these disasters.

Additionally, compared to the previous UPA government's allocation, there has been a substantial increase in the State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF). The provision for disaster relief, which was Rs. 1216.43 crore between 2010 and 2015²⁴, was increased to Rs. 3751 crores during 2015-2020, representing a surge of 208.36%. This significant rise underscores the government's heightened commitment to disaster management and relief endeavours, ensuring enhanced support and resources for states like Tamil Nadu during times of crisis.²⁵

Severe Water Shortage in Tamil Nadu

Water scarcity is a significant concern in Tamil Nadu, exacerbated by factors such as erratic rainfall patterns, overexploitation of groundwater, and inadequate water management practices. The World Bank recently released a technical report highlighting the critical water risk faced by all 21 urban local bodies (ULBs) in Tamil Nadu, which are part of the Tamil Nadu Climate Resilient Urban Development Programme (TNCRUDP). This initiative, backed by \$300 million in aid from the World Bank, aims to address water-related challenges in the state. During the DMK rule, the state's urban areas have grappled with significant water availability and sanitation issues, as evidenced by the assessment conducted using the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas. The report indicates that over 48% of urban Tamil Nadu has experienced water-related challenges, exacerbating the water crisis.

The severe northeast monsoon of 2015, followed by the worst drought in 140 years in 2016, showcased the vulnerability of Tamil Nadu's water resources. The subsequent summer



of 2019 witnessed a 'Day Zero' water crisis in Chennai, with major reservoirs depleting entirely. Moreover, a significant number of tanks identified for water storage have been repurposed for municipal waste disposal, further exacerbating the water management challenges. However, despite these adversities, the AIADMK government took swift and decisive action to address the crisis.

The water supply situation in most ULBs is dire, with residents receiving water for only one to three hours per day. Bulk water supply levels are well below the national guideline of 135 liters per capita per day, forcing the public to rely on informal water sources during extreme climatic events. However, these sources often become unsafe and unavailable. Uncontrolled non-revenue water further strains freshwater sources, leading to wastage.

Green cover, crucial for mitigating heat waves and enhancing adaptive capacity, is insufficient in the ULBs. Only four ULBs have more than one square meter per capita green space, far below the WHO-prescribed 9 square meter per capita. Additionally, the green cover falls below the recommended 12% to 18% guideline set by the Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) guidelines.

Access to sanitation services is also poor, posing public health risks due to water source contamination during floods and storms. For one-third of ULBs with sewerage networks, service coverage is less than 40%, leaving a large part of the population reliant on unsafe sanitation practices. Women and children bear the brunt of this, facing increased health

risks and disrupting educational opportunities due to water-related diseases.²⁶

Thus, the central government's initiation of the Mission Amrit Sarovars underscores its commitment to water conservation and sustainability across the nation. This initiative aims to develop and rejuvenate water bodies in every district, to conserve water for future generations. In Tamil Nadu, under the Mission Amrit Sarovar, the establishment of 2325 Amrit Sarovars highlights the state's dedication to promoting water sustainability and addressing the challenges posed by water scarcity. The establishment of Amrit Sarovar plays a crucial role in mitigating the issue of water scarcity by replenishing and conserving water resources within the state. Tamil Nadu is taking proactive steps to conserve water resources, ensuring a more secure water future for its residents²⁷.



III. Agriculture's downfall in Tamil Nadu under DMK

Tamil Nadu, celebrated for its rich agricultural legacy, finds itself ensnared in a complex web of challenges that imperil the livelihoods of its farmers and the sustainability of its agricultural sector. Under the governance of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the state's agriculture has encountered significant turmoil, marked by ineffective policies, mismanagement, and unfulfilled promises. As we embark on a journey to understand the intricate web of issues plaguing Tamil Nadu's agricultural landscape, it is imperative to conduct objective research and undertake careful analyses of reports to shed light on the gravity of the situation.

Historically, the DMK has wielded influence over Tamil Nadu's political landscape for the majority of its formative years, with leaders like M. Karunanidhi presiding over the state's affairs for decades. However, the policies and schemes implemented during these tenures have often fallen short of expectations, marred by allegations of corruption and lacklustre execution. The current regime, led by M.K. Stalin, has continued this trend, perpetuating a cycle of neglect and deterioration that threatens to irreversibly harm the state's agriculture.

One of the critical issues facing Tamil Nadu's agriculture is the longstanding Cauvery River dispute with Karnataka, a contentious issue that has historically been mismanaged by successive DMK governments. Despite brief reprieves under the AIADMK-led administration of Jayalalithaa, the dispute remains unresolved, exacerbating the challenges faced by farmers dependent on the Cauvery's waters.



A farmer looks at the skies in drought-hit Tamil Nadu

Another pressing concern is groundwater depletion, exacerbated by decades of mismanagement, political apathy, and institutional incompetence. The absence of effective measures at the state level to manage water resources, coupled with corruption and poor adoption of new technologies, has pushed Tamil Nadu towards a water crisis of alarming proportions. While initiatives like the Amrit Sarovar Mission have been launched at the national level to address surface water conservation, Tamil Nadu lags behind in implementation, reflecting a lack of political will to tackle the issue head-on. Out of the 34 states/UTs, Tamil Nadu ranks 20th in terms of percentage of Amrit Sarovars completed out of those identified (as on 20th March, 2024), showcasing the state's faltering efforts to address water conservation.

Furthermore, the DMK's promises to rejuvenate the agricultural sector have often fallen short, with budget allocations failing to meet expectations and key electoral promises remaining unfulfilled. Despite commitments to support prices for agricultural produce and strengthen market linkages, farmers continue to grapple with mounting debts and diminishing livelihood opportunities. The failure to promote organic farming and address invasive plant species further underscores the government's inability to address critical agricultural challenges.

As we delve deeper into the intricacies of Tamil Nadu's agricultural landscape, it becomes apparent that a comprehensive understanding of the issues is essential to formulate effective solutions. Through objective research and careful analyses of reports, this chapter sheds light on the root causes of the crisis and pave the way for meaningful reforms.

DMK's Historical Mismanagement of the Cauvery Water Dispute

Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and DMK leader, M. Karunanidhi, has been in power in the state for nearly two decades. One of the reasons agricultural growth in the state has been hampered is the long-term impact of poorly formulated policies and the failure of the state government since the 1970s. One major issue that curses the state's agriculture and irks the farmers is the Cauvery water dispute, which has been a thorn in the state's path to development since the DMK came to power.

The Cauvery River also known as the Ganges of the South, is a major river in South India that originates in the Western Ghats and flows through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. The Cauvery water dispute is one of India's longest-standing and most contentious interstate river water disputes.

DMK government led by M. Karunanidhi has historically failed to capitalize on opportunities to get the rightful share of the Cauvery water in the past 40 years due to his own vested interests. As Chief Minister of the state, M. Karunanidhi's silence had a deafening effect on the state's populace, when Karnataka started building dams across the Cauvery, namely; the Hemavathi, Kabini and Herangi rivers against the 1924 accord between the two states. Since the 1970s, there were lacklustre attempts by the Karnataka government, specifically the DMK, to negotiate for water distribution of the Cauvery River. It was only in 1990 that the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) was formed. Interestingly, the DMK government still proved to be a failure in terms of getting its people the benefits of the Tribunal's award.

In 2016, DMK leader M. Karunanidhi was accused of giving incorrect information on the Cauvery water dispute and rejecting the offer by former Karnataka Chief Minister Devaraj Urs to give 265 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) to Tamil Nadu. Interestingly, M. Karunanidhi had himself admitted withdrawing the case against Karnataka in the Supreme Court pertaining to the Cauvery water dispute on the advice of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1972. However, the subsequent talks between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka which had led to Devaraj Urs making the promise, also failed owing to Karunanidhi refusing to accept the offer.²⁸

For several decades, thereafter, Karunanidhi was accused of compromising on the

State's rights and the withdrawal of the suit was cited as the reason for Tamil Nadu not getting its rightful share of the Cauvery water from Karnataka. S. Ranganathan, the then general secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association, whose petition in the Supreme Court in 1983 had led to the constitution of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT), claimed that the DMK government of 2006-11, headed by Karunanidhi was "tardy" in getting the final order issued by the CWDT in February 2007 published in the Central government gazette, a crucial development which was left to AIADMK leader Jayalalithaa.²⁹

The case was revived only in 1983 after the Cauvery Irrigation Farmers Welfare Association filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to constitute the Cauvery Tribunal.³⁰

It was not before 1993, under the AIADMK Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who went on a fast at the MGR memorial in Chennai to demand Tamil Nadu's share of water as stipulated by the CWDT's interim order, that the process was expedited. After a few more years of stagnation of the Tribunal Award and protests in both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which coincided with a 5-year term of DMK during 1996-2001, the state was still reeling in water shortage, significantly affecting its agriculture. During DMK's fourth term (2006-2011), it was Jayalalithaa again who underwent a token fast in Chennai, demanding the publication of the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal in the Official Gazette of the Centre.³¹

Finally in 2013, under Jayalalithaa-led AIADMK, the Centre made the final award of the CWDT public in an extraordinary gazette. While the AIADMK celebrated this development as a huge success after 22 long years of struggle,³² the damage to the state's agriculture sector could not be undone.

Speaking about the most recent full-term of the DMK government, Tamil Nadu's net sown area reduced by more than 600 acres between 2006 and 2011,³³ while the production of total foodgrains reduced by nearly a thousand tonnes in the state during 2006-2011.³⁴

In the larger scheme of things, sustainable agricultural solutions should be embraced, as it appears that the river alone cannot fulfil the agricultural and drinking water needs of the entire region. To protect the livelihoods of millions and preserve the environment, the implementation of a long-term strategy for managing the river basin is of utmost importance. To safeguard the livelihoods of millions and the environment, a long-term strategy for managing the river basin is required. However, Tamil Nadu's groundwater depletion is another story that dulls the hopes for those who expect much from the state's agriculture.

Groundwater Depletion – A worrying factor for Tamil Nadu's future

Groundwater in India accounts for two-thirds of irrigation water and over four-fifths of drinking water in India. Besides being the lifeline of people, it is also the major source of livelihood and prosperity for all of India's farmers. In Tamil Nadu, decades of mismanagement, political and institutional incompetence, indifference at the state and municipal levels, and a steadily increasing population - together are leading the state towards disaster. On top of that, there is an absence of serious and sustained attempts at

the state level to manage water quantity and quality, a lack of implementation of existing laws and regulations, and pervasive corruption and poor adoption rates of new and cost-effective technologies. Policies are primarily ad-hoc, incorrect and incoherent, and rarely implemented properly.

While surface water conditions are bad, groundwater situation is even worse. For surface water conservation, the Central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Amrit Sarovar Mission in April 2022, which has seen nearly 72,000 Amrit Sarovars being constructed as on 20th March, 2024.³⁵ However, out of the 34 states/UTs, Tamil Nadu ranks 20th in terms of percentage of Amrit Sarovars completed out of those identified (as on 20th March, 2024).³⁶

Given the over-extraction of groundwater blocks and poor management of groundwater, it is no coincidence that Tamil Nadu is one of the leading states with the highest number of protests by farmers and suicides.³⁷

Farmers misled by DMK

The DMK government in its 2021 manifesto had promised to prepare a separate budget for agriculture. However, it was seen that the DMK actually reduced the budget allocation for the agriculture sector in 2022-23 as compared to the 2021-22 budget, reducing it from Rs. 23,398 crores in 2021-22³⁸ to Rs. 21,363 crores in 2022-23 (Budget Estimates)³⁹, showcasing the disparity between the government's claims and their actions. P.R. Pandian, president, Coordination Committee of All Farmers Associations of Tamil Nadu, said, *"The government cannot deceive the farmers by just projecting the Agriculture Budget while remaining silent on the election promise."*⁴⁰

The DMK has failed to fulfil a number of electoral promises from its 2021 manifesto is pertaining to the creation of rural markets and strengthening of market linkages⁴¹ to prevent the exploitation of farmers.

Farmers bodies flay DMK for failing to fulfil election promise on hiking procurement price of sugarcane, paddy

Agriculture Budget criticised for lack of initiatives to ensure remunerative prices for farm produce

February 20, 2024 06:06 pm | Updated 06:06 pm IST - TIRUCHI

Despite nearly three years since M.K. Stalin-led DMK formed the government in the state in 2021, the farmers are still in crisis. Farmers' organisations in February 2024 expressed disappointment over the "lack of initiatives" in the State Agriculture Budget to ensure remunerative prices for farm produce. Further, the promise by the DMK to "fix a minimum support price (MSP) for farmer produce" has also fallen flat, with the farmers organisations now becoming hopeless especially in regard to the hiking of the procurement price of sugarcane to Rs. 4,000 a tonne and that of paddy to Rs. 2,500 a quintal.⁴² On 1st September, 2023, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin issued directions

to set the MSP for paddy at Rs. 2,310 a quintal for Grade-A varieties, and Rs. 2,265 a quintal for common varieties,⁴³ much lower than the promised Rs. 2,500 a quintal.

In addition, the procurement price for sugarcane was hiked by Rs. 20 per metric tonne, which was labelled as “an insult to farmers” by the Secretary of the Thanjavur District Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, Sundara Vimalnathan.⁴⁴



Protesting farmers and police clash in Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur

Reflecting on the failure by the DMK to erase farmers' woes, President of the Cauvery Irrigation Farmers Welfare Association, Mahadhanapuram V. Rajaram, observed, “There has been no initiative to ensure remunerative prices for agriculture produce through value addition or strengthening market linkages. *There is no plan to stabilise prices of horticulture produce through the year. Nor has there been any announcement on promoting food processing industries. Farmers seem to be condemned to remain eternally dependent on subsidies.*”⁴⁵

Mass exodus of farmers due to losses

In 2014, the Federation of Tamil Nadu Agricultural Associations Secretary provided data regarding the number of farmers leaving the agriculture sector between 2001 and 2011. It was stated that 8,67,582 farmers had stopped agriculture due to various reasons, including huge loss. Further, there was an increase in the number of agricultural labourers during the period, as farmers chose to sell their land to real estate and worked rather for daily wages due to financial insecurity in agriculture.⁴⁶ Notably, more than 60% of the duration (2001-2011) during which this mass exodus from the agriculture sector took place coincided with the tenure of the DMK government in the state and the Indian National Congress at the centre. The DMK government led by M. Karunanidhi was in power during 1996-2001 and from 2006 to 2011, while the Congress was at the centre from 2004 to 2014. The above data reflects the cumulative effect of the poorly formulated policies at the ground level, especially in Tamil Nadu, where agriculture has not just been an occupation but a way of life.

Poor Institutional Checks preventing Small and Medium Farmers from getting the benefits of state government's schemes

The DMK had in its 2021 and 2019 manifestos promised to waive off farm and jewellery loans of small and medium farmers. However, in December 2023, four years after the DMK initially declared their commitment, the promise remained unfulfilled. The DMK government led by M.K. Stalin seemed to be unable to provide the said relief to the state's small and medium farmers, with the Consumer Forum needing to step in to resolve the issues of the farmers.

On 3rd December, 2023, in the Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu, the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum directed the Manager of a Primary Agricultural Cooperative Bank (PACB) and the Virudhunagar District Central Cooperative (VDCC) Bank to pay a compensation of Rs. 50,000 to a farmer for attempting to collect excess interest on agricultural jewel loan (AJL).

It was found that the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Bank (PACB) and the VDCC Bank had refused to give the member of the PACB, a farmer, the benefit of the jewel loan waiver scheme, announced by the state government.

The forum directed the banks to resolve the AJL as per the provisions of loan waiver scheme and hand over the gold jewels to the complainant. They were also directed to pay, either jointly or separately, the compensation of Rs. 50,000 for the farmer's mental agony and Rs. 10,000 towards litigation fees. It was also directed that the entire loan amount be waived off within 6 weeks.⁴⁷

This case study points to the inability of the DMK government to ensure smooth implementation of its policies and schemes, with quasi-judicial and autonomous bodies needing to intervene to ensure that farmers are not exploited in the state.

Workers of Co-operative Sugar Mills in Madurai unpaid for over 20 months

The six decades-old National Co-operative Sugar Mills at Alanganallur in Madurai district, oldest in Tamil Nadu, which stopped its operation in 2019 owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, cost the employment of 76 of its workers. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had promised in his election campaign that the mill would be reopened. However, no steps have been taken in this direction. The employees, who haven't been paid for more than two years, have started to become hopeless. DMK's Agriculture Minister M.R.L Panneerselvam had assured in both Assembly and party meetings that the mill would be reopened, but any follow-up talks have remained absent despite several representations.

The mill, spanning across nearly 140 acres of land, had started in 1966 with a capacity to crush 1,000 tonnes of sugarcane per day. Since then, it has been upgraded twice at a cost of nearly Rs. 10 crores, expanding its capacity to crush 2,500 tonnes daily. The shutdown of the mill, which is the sole co-operative mill in the southern districts of the state, has affected sugarcane farmers, as well.

The uncertainty - whether to quit the job or to stay wage-less – has seeped in. Some farmers and workers are rendered vulnerable and at the mercy of private lenders, which has the potential to spiral them into a vicious cycle of debt and poverty.

State president of the Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers Association, N. Palanisamy, stated that while a committee appointed by the State government had estimated the cost for the payment of pending wages, its report was on hold. He said, "A committee appointed by the State government inspected and estimated Rs. 27 crores (Rs. 10 crores for repairs and Rs. 17 crores for payment of pending wages) were needed to reopen the mill. That report is put on hold leaving both the farmers and the workers in a blind situation."⁴⁸

A senior agricultural officer overseeing all 16 co-operative mills in Tamil Nadu said that

the committee's report and the pending salary details had been forwarded to the State Government. However, it is yet to be seen when the M.K. Stalin-led DMK government would act on the committee's report, and whether the government's pro-farmer stance is just for electoral gains.

Sugarcane Farmers detained while demanding pending dues

TN: Thanjavur Sugarcane Farmers Detained While Demanding Pending Dues

A sugar mill in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, Thiru Arooran Sugars Limited, was shut down in 2018 owing to losses, and was taken over by another organisation through auction, without paying the dues to the sugarcane farmers. However, the sugarcane farmers who supplied sugarcane to the mill are ignored with around Rs. 85 crores yet to be disbursed to them. Further exacerbating their crises, the farmers received notices from the banks for repayment of loans, which the mill had obtained to the tune of Rs. 300 crores in the name of around 7,000 farmers. Shockingly, the mill had deducted the payable amount from the farmers without paying the banks in turn. When the farmers started an indefinite sit-in protest from November 30, 2022, the DMK Government turned a blind eye on them. This led to the farmers attempting to lay a siege to the district collector's office in Thanjavur on December 21, 2022. However, they were detained by the police without initiating any dialogue.

The farmers also raised suspicions over the urgency of the resale of the mill, which did not ensure the disbursement of the pending Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) and State Advisory Price (SAP) for the sugarcane supplied to the mill.

Due to their status as loan defaulters, farmers are facing challenges in accessing fresh loans for both farming and personal needs. The new management is allegedly pressuring them to accept an offer of receiving 57% of their pending dues in four instalments within one year. This arrangement is likely to render farmers dependent on the sugar mills' new management, increasing the risk of exploitation. As a result, the future livelihoods of approximately 7,000 farmers and their families hang in the balance.⁴⁹

Sugar Mills obtaining loans in the names of farmers without their knowledge

TN sugarcane farmers seek action against private mills for availing loans in their names

Another instance of similar nature happened in February 2023, where representatives of sugarcane farmers associations from across Tamil Nadu staged a demonstration, seeking the intervention of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in fulfilling their long-pending demands.

When they attempted to march towards the state secretariat, holding sugarcane stalks in their hands, they were arrested by the police.

This was another shocking repeat of the instance where the private sugar mills obtained loans from nationalised banks in the name of the sugarcane farmers without their knowledge. As a result, the banks were sending notices to farmers, demanding the repayment of loans. The farmers labelled the act as a criminal offence and demanded the DMK government to issue a certificate to the farmers mentioning that they did not obtain any loans, saving them from legal proceedings. The sugarcane farmers had agitated in this regard for around 80 days, but to no avail as the DMK overnment chose to ignore their pleas.

Evidence and reports point to the stark reality that the M.K. Stalin-led DMK Government has failed to fulfil another crucial promise from its 2021 manifesto, which mentioned creating a deadline for cooperative and private sugar mills to pay back any pending amount to sugarcane farmers, and initiating serious actions against those who fail to do so.

The farmers also demanded for the State Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane and the disbursal of arrears from private sugar mills to the tune of Rs. 1,200 crores. Further, they claimed that the DMK government, led by M.K. Stalin, had not fulfilled the electoral promise given for providing Rs. 4,000 as the procurement price per tonne of sugarcane.⁵⁰

Organic farming in a state of distress

After assuming office in 2021, the DMK government brought out the Tamil Nadu organic farming policy. An amount of Rs. 33.03 crores was allocated for the implementation of the 'Organic farming development scheme,' among other steps. However, there is clear evidence that the state of organic farming in Tamil Nadu is in a state of distress. For instance, farmers get a subsidy by the state government of Rs. 5,000 on inputs for conventional farming per acre of land, but there is no subsidy for organic farming. In the first two years of organic farming, yield is low and there are a number of other challenges. This is why an input subsidy is a must to provide a fillip to the organic farmers. But so far, this has been missing in Tamil Nadu.

The number of shops dealing with organic inputs is also low. The DMK government needs to pay attention these aspects in order to truly provide a boost to organic farming in the state.

At present, the prevalence of various diseases can be attributed to the consumption of unhealthy foods, with many people mindlessly purchasing fruits and vegetables from markets without considering the chemicals used for cultivation. To address this, the government should allocate dedicated spaces for organic products in 'Uzhavar Sandhais' (farmers' markets) and establish separate pricing mechanisms for such items. This will help consumers easily identify and access organic products.

While the Central Government's Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) has helped

add more than 35,000 hectares of area under organic farming in Tamil Nadu since 2015-16⁵¹, the state government hasn't been able to make independent initiatives to promote organic farming, with the Tamil Nadu Organic Farming Policy 2023 stating that the state has around 32,000 hectares of organic agriculture land.⁵²

Further, despite being the 10th largest state in India by area, Tamil Nadu ranks 14th in terms of land under organic farming⁵³, reflecting the lacklustre efforts that the state government has shown in the recent years to promote organic farming.

Improper steps by DMK Government to eliminate invasive species

The DMK government led by M.K. Stalin had promised in its 2021 manifesto that it would take steps to maintain water bodies across the state and weed out the invasive plant species, specifically the 'Aagaya Thamarai' and 'Seemai Karuvelam Maram' plants, which negatively affect the capacity of the waterbodies and their flow. However, in July 2023, after sensing no action from the state government in this regard, the Madras High Court expressed displeasure over the manner in which the Tamil Nadu government was taking steps to weed out the invasive species from its forests and water bodies.

Initiate proper steps to weed out 'Seemai Karuvelam' to state

Source: Times of India

A special bench of the Madras High Court observed that while the state had taken a policy decision to uproot the invasive species, it did not seem keen on implementing the court orders passed on the issue in 2022. Notably, the DMK government had informed the court in 2022 that the 'Seemai Karuvelam' would be wiped out from the state in a duration of ten years in a phased manner, and maintenance activities would be carried out to ensure that the invasive species do not regrow.

Following pleas in the court, it was pointed out by the bench that the state had not constituted committees to oversee the removal work at district levels, as was directed by the bench,⁵⁴ showcasing the lack of political will on the part of the M.K. Stalin-led DMK government to restore and preserve the state's rich ecological diversity.

Lacking aspects in 2023-24 Agriculture Budget

Even as the M.K. Stalin-led DMK Government in Tamil Nadu came out with its fourth exclusive agriculture Budget, the social space was marred by concerns and worries among the farmers and people involved in agriculture about the efficacy of the exercise. While it is argued in favour of an exclusive agriculture budget that it facilitates higher allocation, critics have felt that the same would have been possible even with the earlier practice of an encompassing budget. When an analytical approach is taken to scrutinize this claim by the DMK government, the findings are contrary.

For instance, contrary to its electoral promises, which are the bedrock of a functioning and thriving electoral democracy, the ruling party has not determined incentive amounts to boost the support price for paddy to Rs. 2,500 per quintal and for sugarcane to Rs. 4,000 per tonne.⁵⁵

Presenting the 2024 Budget speech, DMK's Agriculture Minister M.R.K. Panneerselvam himself admitted a shortfall on the part of the government in meeting the demand for pulses and oilseeds. For instance, as against the annual requirement of nearly 18.5 lakh tonnes of edible oil, the state could only produce 4.85 lakh tonnes.

Further, the volume of crop loans, disbursed through Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies (PACCS), has continued to stagnate over the past years, which highlights the encroaching of space of agricultural credit by the credit cooperative societies. As per veteran agricultural scientists and media reports, DMK needs to pay sustained attention to address this problem.⁵⁶

The DMK government needs to substantially increase the allocation for the farm sector, cutting down on populist schemes are would spell disaster for in the long-term.

Tamil Nadu's Agriculture Budget 2024 'disappointing' for Sugarcane Farmers

TN: Agriculture Budget Disappoints Sugarcane Farmers, Revival of Sugar Mills Unaddressed

Source: NewsClick

The community of sugarcane farmers in Tamil Nadu were left disappointed by the state's agriculture budget presented on February 20, 2024. The incentive increased by sugarcane was dismal, a mere Rs. 20 increase per quintal from Rs. 195 during 2023-24 to Rs. 215 during 2024-25. The farmers are still getting a Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of Rs. 3,131 per ton, much lower than the promise of Rs. 4,000 per ton by the DMK ahead of the 2021 assembly elections.⁵⁷

A Grim Future under DMK

Tamil Nadu's agriculture sector under the DMK government has run into numerous obstacles. The scheme to provide 50,000 additional free electricity connections to farmers in the state is still running into delays after more than 6 months of launch.⁵⁸ The promise of 90% subsidy to farmers for drip irrigation is still missing after nearly three years of having been passed, and no steps have been taken to boost the promotion of horticulture produce and stabilise prices of the same.⁵⁹ Despite all of these being crucial promises of the DMK's 2021 manifesto,⁶⁰ the M.K. Stalin-led administration needs to prove that it is still upholding the democratic structure of the Indian society and showcase transparency and accountability, which are the very pillars that keep electoral democracy steady and thriving.



IV. An Ailing Healthcare System

With the majority of its population being young, India has a huge demographic dividend. Maximizing such a demographic advantage requires sustained investments in social sector infrastructure to lead toward long-term sustainable growth. Performance in Health empowerment of citizens is one of the most important human development indicators that can substantially accelerate national progress. The central government has launched several measures to ensure comprehensive healthcare services are accessible to everyone. However, for achieving success in the outcomes of such measures, fostering a strong centre-state partnership is very important.

In India, both the centre and state are equally entrusted with ensuring the effective implementation of health policies. The objective behind making health a concurrent subject is to improve the implementation of policies at the local level and ensure better policy-making with assistance from central technical institutes like ICMR, DCGI, and CDSCO among others. The central government assists the states in crucial planning and provides financial assistance and support for the effective implementation of healthcare policies. This makes the coordination between states and centre very critical for desirable public healthcare delivery. In states that have a double-engine government i.e., both state and centre government belonging to the same party, fast-paced growth in the implementation of healthcare policies is seen. However, in states where the interests of state government and central government do not align well, the performance is seen to have suffered due to delays in adhering to directives from the centre. In some cases, the benefit of centrally-sponsored health schemes does not even reach the public, as states may choose to not participate in the operationalization of a scheme, given that they have the liberty to do so.

Therefore, centre and states must be able to iron out any of their differences, for the larger benefit of the public. In the event of a lack of coordination and cooperation, it is only the public that suffers the most. Through this chapter which is based on a thorough study of Tamil Nadu, an effort has been made to highlight the centre-state partnership's importance in driving health outcomes and achieving even progress across the country.

1. Implementation of Health Insurance Schemes in the State (*The persisting gap between need and service*)

1.1 Tamil Nadu Needs More Ayushman Cards Than it is currently generating

Wider coverage of health insurance schemes among the population can be pathbreaking in the healthcare landscape. Ayushman Bharat Yojana, a centrally sponsored health insurance scheme remains one of the most important healthcare interventions in India which has improved both the affordability and accessibility of quality healthcare services for poor people. Introduced in 2018, the scheme provides health coverage of Rs 5 lakhs per family per year against diseases/conditions that require hospitalization. The scheme has led to a breakthrough in public health service delivery by also bringing private hospitals

under its ambit, thereby making their services affordable. Undeniably, the scheme has led to improvement in the quality of healthcare services and standardization of treatment protocols. It has also facilitated improving health equity among the population and reduced the healthcare expenditure burden on poor households.

State-wise Ayushman Cards Created

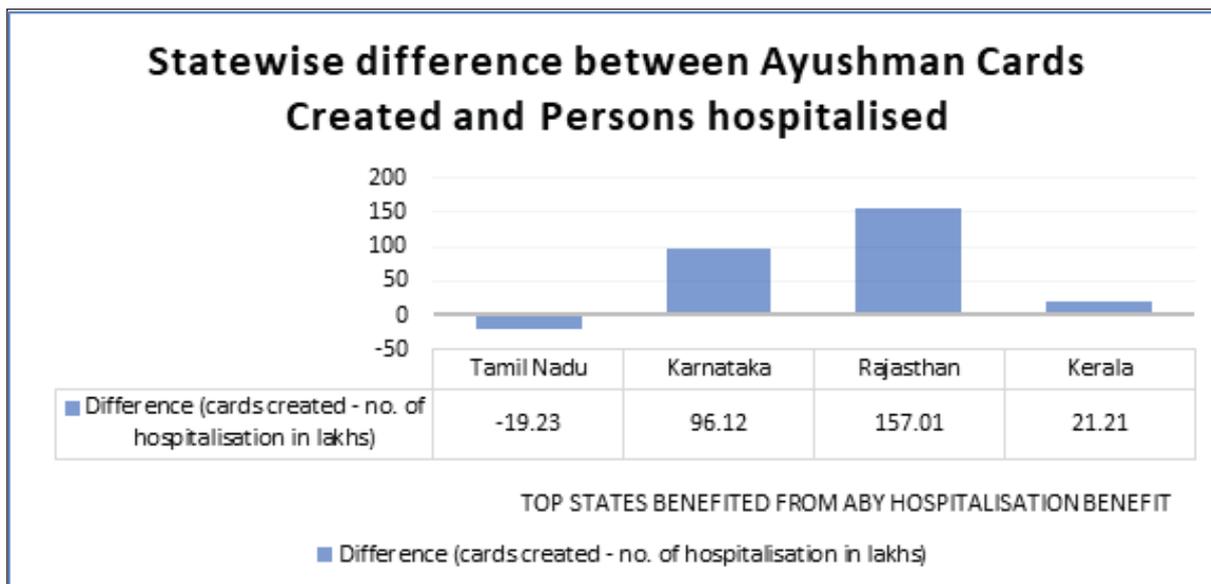
(in Lakhs)

State Name	Total
UTTAR PRADESH	5,03,43,043
MADHYA PRADESH	3,97,29,770
MAHARASHTRA	2,69,99,054
GUJARAT	2,47,68,493
BIHAR	2,42,73,537
CHHATTISGARH	2,16,62,225
RAJASTHAN	2,14,41,687
ASSAM	1,68,58,028
KARNATAKA	1,62,17,186
ANDHRA PRADESH	1,54,47,759
JHARKHAND	1,19,90,610
HARYANA	1,14,30,756
PUNJAB	85,88,686
JAMMU AND KASHMIR	85,32,112
TELANGANA	82,50,353
KERALA	75,86,400
TAMIL NADU	71,26,023

Source: ABY Portal

The State of Tamil Nadu has benefitted substantially since the scheme was operationalized. Most hospitalizations authorized under the scheme across India are from the state of Tamil Nadu. That simply means the need for the central public health insurance scheme is higher in Tamil Nadu as compared to other states.

There can be many reasons behind this including the lack of quality preventive care facilities in the state, and states’ failure to encourage promotive healthcare measures among others. Whatever the reasons may be, the centrally sponsored Ayushman Bharat scheme has offset those disadvantages suffered by the people, benefitting almost 90.5 lakh people in the state.⁶¹ However, despite data showcasing that the need for centrally sponsored public health insurance, Ayushman Bharat is highest in the state, the state’s performance in creating Ayushman cards for beneficiaries is worse than expected. Only 71.2 lakh people have Ayushman cards in the state – much below the numbers than required. Tamil Nadu is the only state where the number of Ayushman cards created is less than the beneficiaries hospitalized under the scheme, which highlights a major disparity between the need for the scheme and its implementation in the state.



Tamil Nadu is the only state where the number of Ayushman cards created is less than the beneficiaries hospitalized under the scheme

However, this is not the only public health insurance grievance suffered by the people of the state. On one hand, when the need for Ayushman card generation is greater in Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, patients are rather being forced to get their CMCHIS card created to receive treatment for even those ailments for which they would not have even been required to get insured in the first place but now they are being denied treatment for lack of their registration in the Chief Minister’s Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS). CMCHIS is another health insurance scheme implemented in the state and is solely designed by the state government. But instead of complementing the efforts of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, it is proving to have a debilitating impact on public healthcare delivery in the state.

1.2 Patients coerced to Join CMCHIS scheme as Hospitals deny treatment

The bad implementation of the CMCHIS scheme lies not only in its poor execution but also in the way, the scheme has been designed. As hospitals in Tamil Nadu struggle with poor funding from the government, they are increasingly becoming over-dependent on funds generated from the CMCHIS scheme. Due to this reason, patients are being forced to get their CMCHIS cards created or else are being denied treatment even in government hospitals as complained by several people. Additionally, it can take a delay of almost one month in many cases for patients to get successfully enrolled under the scheme, due to which even initiating treatment early becomes difficult. However, if there is an emergency, the patients are forced to pay for the treatment in the government hospitals as they are unable to survive till the time they can become beneficiaries under the scheme.

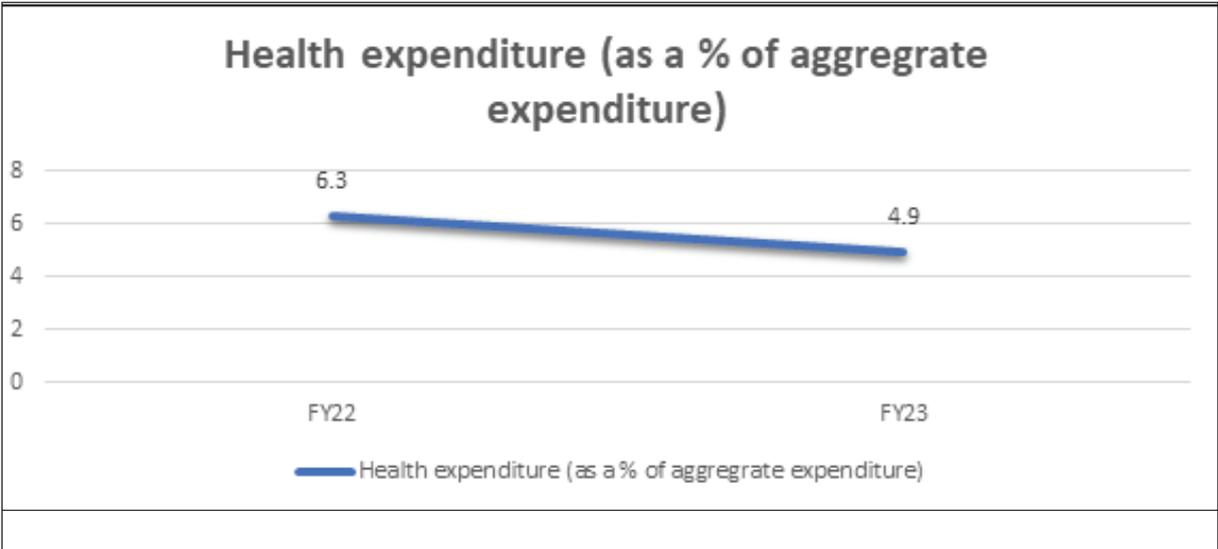
Doctors and medical students have complained that they are being pressured by the hospitals to work as agents who have targets to convince more people to enrol under the scheme as 72 percent of the claim amount is credited to the account of the treatment institution. This in turn is exerting more pressure on them which they believe can possibly

jeopardize their performance. Further, doctors complain that the amount of the claim in many cases is rejected on flimsy grounds, and even if approved after excess and unwarranted scrutiny, the amount credited is much less than the total package. An RTI reply revealed that the state government is not even monitoring the cases in which claims were rejected as it has no such data related to it.⁶²

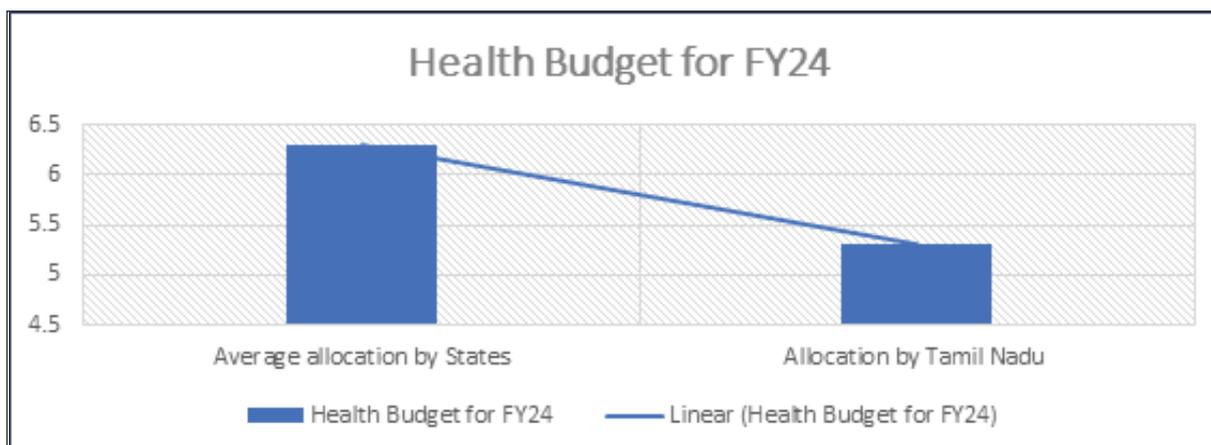
Nearly half of the empanelled hospitals under the scheme are non-government but they reportedly in many instances have been found to have denied admissions to the beneficiaries of the scheme. Private hospitals complain that firstly, it is difficult to get approval for insurance claims and even if that is approved, the amount released is significantly lower than what would be required for the complete treatment. Even if private hospitals agree to admit a patient, in case, the rest of the amount that cannot be met from the insurance money released, is agreed to be paid by the patient itself, the burden of treatment falls down on the shoulder of the patient or attendant. Patients forced to raise loans for treatment even when they already have insurance certainly is an unpleasant experience for the common man and may force families into poverty due to high out-of-pocket expenditures.

2. Dwindling Expenditure on Health Sector in State

The quality of healthcare is degrading in the State as under the rule of the DMK government, the expenditure on healthcare is declining at a rapid pace. The state expenditure on Medical and Public Health and Family Welfare (as a percent of Aggregate Expenditure) has declined to 4.9 percent in FY23 from 6.3 percent in FY22. Additionally, the state health expenditure as a percent of total expenditure in FY24 was lower than the average allocation by states in the healthcare sector.⁶³ The DMK government came to power in 2021 but since then the budget for health has declined. Even when the state government increased the health budget in 2024 from what it allocated in 2023, the budget still is lower than what was allocated in 2021.



Source: RBI State Statistics



Source: PRS

Tamil Nadu Health Budget in crores				
S. No.	Year	BE	RE	Actuals
1.	2024-25	18,576	18,545
2.	2023-24	17,204	17,369
3.	2022-23	17,733	18,065	16,245
4.	2021-22	18,632	20,080	19,012
5.	2020-21	15,773	18,214	17,394

Source: Tamil Nadu Budget Documents and PRS

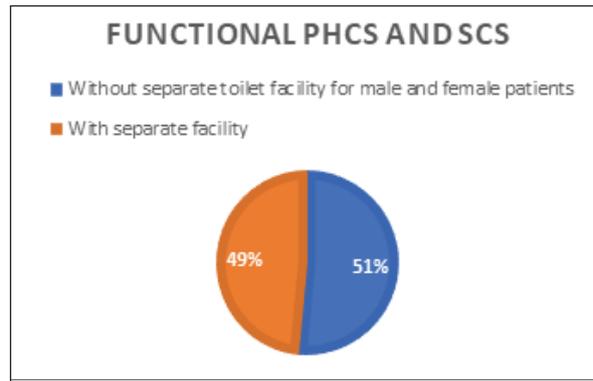
3. Poor Health Infrastructure

Healthcare services should be inclusive for all. India's Health Policy 2017 seeks to achieve universal healthcare coverage by improving the overall infrastructure and quality of care. More attention should be given to the development of rural health infrastructure which is very crucial for meeting the needs of underserved populations and can play an important role in bringing parity in access to healthcare services at all income levels. However, the DMK government has provided scant attention to the development of rural health infrastructure. During the FY2021-2022, when the DMK government was in rule, not a single Community Health Centre (CHC), Primary Health Centre (PHC), or Sub-Centre (SC) was constructed/developed. This is even when the state government in FY22 was required to construct some 2465 Primary Health Centres and Sub-centres in rural areas.⁶⁴ During the same year, more than half of the functional PHCs and SCs in the state were found to have no separate toilet facilities for female and male patients.

Of the existing 8713 Sub-centres in the rural parts of the state (as of March 2022), about 183 are not receiving regular water supply while 95 have no electricity facility.⁶⁵ Moreover, about 19.2 percent of the sub-centres were found to not have ANM quarters. Surprisingly, as many as 36.8 percent of Primary Health Centres did not have at least four (04) bed facilities (a performance below the national average of 25.8) while 91.9 percent did not have an operation theatre. More than one-fifth of the Community Health Centres had no X-ray machine facility. Given such status of rural health infrastructure, the government should invest more in improving it but it has rather reduced the health budget since the FY2021-22 level.

4. Lack of Medical Professionals

Beyond inadequate infrastructure, Tamil Nadu faces a scarcity of essential medical professionals to meet patient needs. In 2022, rural Community Health Centers (CHCs) required approximately 1540 Surgeons, Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (OB&GY), Physicians, and Paediatricians. However, the state only had 249 such professionals in service, marking a deficit of nearly 84 percent. Likewise, out of needed 385 radiographers, as many as 165 were not available. Although 2017 lab technician positions were sanctioned, the state government could only fill 1570. Moreover, in the fiscal year 2022, both rural Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and CHCs witnessed a decrease in the number of doctors and specialists respectively compared to the previous fiscal year. Sub-Centres operate with about 38.3 percent fewer health workers than required, while Primary Health Centres experience a shortage of almost 82 percent in health assistants.



Source: NHM

In tribal regions, there is a deficiency of 457 healthcare workers at sub-centers, where 545 are needed but only 88 are serving. Similarly, in tribal PHCs, there is a shortage of 172 health assistants compared to the required 192. At tribal Community Health Centres, only one physician is present out of the necessary 21, and not a single pediatrician is available.

5. Poor Health Outcomes

a. Increasing deaths due to respiratory diseases, Pneumonia, and Viral Hepatitis: The number of death cases from acute respiratory diseases in the state increased from 132 in 2020 to 542 in 2021. During the same period, deaths due to Viral Hepatitis increased by 4.5 times to 41. Deaths from Pneumonia increased by 6.7 times in 2021 to 3,701 from 550 during the previous year.



Source: India.com

b. Increasing cases of dengue: In 2020, there were 2,410 cases of dengue with zero deaths. But in 2021, when DMK came to power, the dengue cases shot up by 150.5 percent to 6,039 (till December 2021). While no deaths due to dengue took place in 2020, about 8 deaths were recorded in 2021.

Health workers in Mini Clinics lose their jobs

While jobs and pay-related grievances in the Health Sector were part of key poll promises made by DMK in 2021, it however sacked several health workers despite protests.

Some 2000 mini-clinics were set up by AIADMK in 2020 by December. These clinics

provided affordable health services to the poor in the state and employed 1,820 doctors on a contractual basis.⁶⁶ Although Amma clinics were opened to reduce the increasing footprints of patients seeking essential OPD health services at government hospitals during COVID-19, many of the medical professionals employed in these clinics also worked tirelessly in mitigating and treating the COVID cases.

“Job and pay-related grievances of workers in the Tamil Nadu Health Department will be addressed at the earliest.”

-DMK Key Poll Promise in 2021

Status: Not delivered

Their contribution was so enormous during the Pandemic that Madras HC remarked that it would have been impossible to carry out vaccination drives without these mini-clinics.⁶⁷ However, instead of incentivizing these medical professionals for their unwavering contribution to saving the lives of millions of people, DMK sacked them and also denied them timely payment of their hard-earned income promised to them. These workers had to stage protests to get their salaries after 2 months of salary was not paid to them.⁶⁸ Tamil Nadu which is also struggling with a lack of medical professionals than required, could have easily accommodated these doctors but the DMK government did nothing, leaving such a large number of medical professionals to deal with job and future uncertainty.⁶⁹



Doctors in Tamil Nadu protest against DMK



V. The Plummeting Quality of Education

Providing good educational opportunities is one of the prerequisites for achieving strong people-led growth in development. Education enlightens and empowers people to lead better lives which is significantly important for achieving good national prosperity. Education also endows people with opportunities to increase their incomes and enjoy better living standards. Education should be free and accessible to everyone for inclusive development and to reduce inequalities among the masses. In India, education is a fundamental right of citizens, as enshrined in the Constitution. Despite this, the education sector suffered from a state of neglect for years under the rule of the previous government led by UPA. The previous education policy was formulated in 1986 and remained in operation for more than 3 decades even though it had become obsolete. Finally, following the NDA government's rise to power in 2014, the country got to see a new National Education Policy (NEP) which was launched within the period of its first full term of governance.

The NEP 2020 brought major reforms to the education sector, promising to place India as a key educational hub across the globe. In tandem with this, the government has also strengthened the infrastructure, introduced innovations for enhancing the learning experience, and showcased its commitment to making educational opportunities inclusive while prioritizing bridging the academia-industry gap through effective teaching models. Yet, sadly instead of welcoming such a monumental change in the education landscape, the opposition has indulged in petty politics.

On one hand, DMK has denied implementing the New Education Policy in Tamil Nadu but on the other hand, it has also delayed the implementation of its state education policy which it has promised to launch in its 2021 Manifesto, pushing millions of students' future into the darkness and creating an ambiance of despair. Last year, when the draft of the policy was being prepared, one of the panel members responsible for designing the policy resigned alleging that the exercise had been almost futile with the panel being pressurized to produce a policy that is nothing more than a replica of the NEP 2020.⁷⁰ The allegations raise a really important question – whether DMK opposes NEP to launch its policy or whether the decision of non-implementation solely emerges from the hate towards BJP and the matter that it was NDA that designed the new NEP. Certainly, DMK wants to implement NEP 2020 like state policy but not NEP solely to get itself political credits. Not to forget that DMK is the same government that on the one hand promised to ban NEET exams in its manifesto and is now promoting coaching for the same. Overall, the delay in the implementation of its state education policy while denying implementation of NEP really profits no one and boils down to DMK's action being a zero-sum game for all stakeholders.

1 Lack of Quality Infrastructure

The state government struggles to address the plethora of challenges that have rotten up the state education system. Government Schools in Tamil Nadu lack quality infrastructure. A CAG report released in 2022 flagged that schools in the state have a shortage of approximately 11,711 classrooms.⁷¹ It was further revealed that about 24 percent of

classrooms are highly prone to disaster risks as they were part of kutchha buildings. In addition, as many as 1,669 buildings were found to be damaged. As of FY22, about 7,772 schools are without playgrounds while Tamil Nadu was the only state to not have reported a single digital library.⁷²

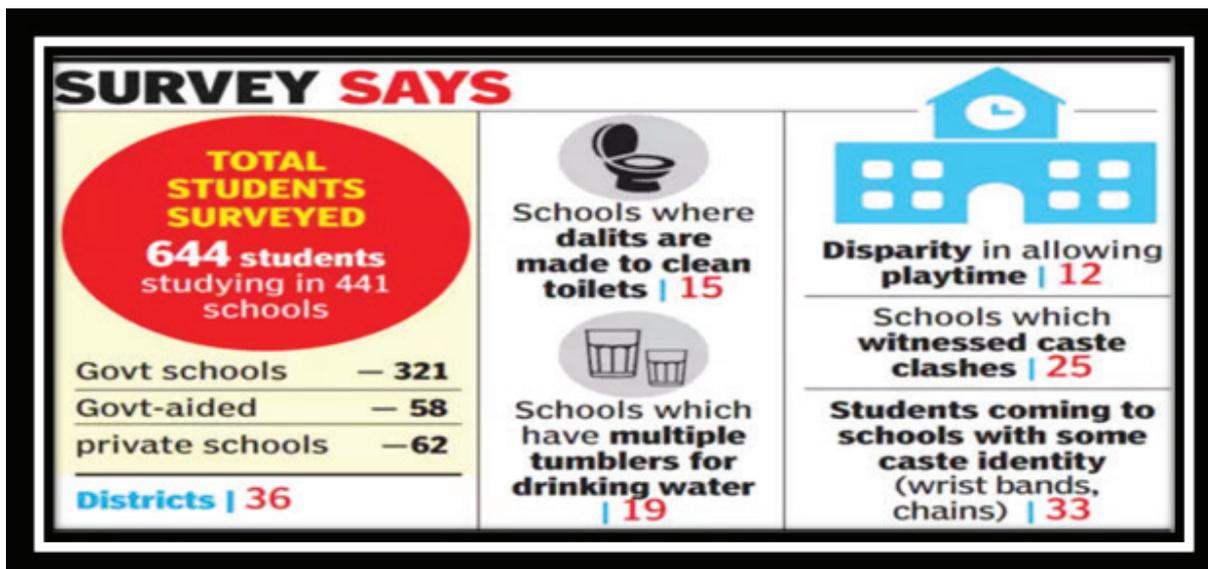
Only 17579 of the total 58801 schools reported having toilets for the disabled, marking a deficit of 70 percent more than required. As many as 671 schools were found to be functioning without girls' toilets and 1,172 schools were found not to have boy's toilets. Further, about 721 schools reported not having functional girls' toilets. About 90 percent of the schools i.e., 52986 do not have computers while 62 percent do not have internet facilities.



Source: The Hindu

2 DMK fails to provide a safe environment for students

Tamil Nadu is the only Southern state that has not reported a single government school providing training on psycho-social aspects to empower students emotionally while the harassment inside the schools is rampant. A recent survey has revealed that about 30 percent of schools in Tamil Nadu still practice caste discrimination against students, denying them safe spaces for learning opportunities. The majority of the schools surveyed were government-run or government-aided. About 15 schools were found to be using Dalit students for the task of cleaning school toilets. Many schools were found to have segregated allocation of students' entitlements based on their caste. In 19 schools of Tamil Nadu, Dalit students are not allowed to drink from public tap water connection, as the school management requires them to drink water only from separate tumblers. Not only that, in many of the schools in the state, students are not allowed to share food if they are from different castes. In some instances, the school management has also reserved rooms for non-Dalit students to eat separately while separation was also found in the use of playgrounds.



Source: TOI

Not only that, many female students reported feeling unsafe inside the school premises. Some alleged having faced sexual harassment while some of the girls said that they felt unsafe using school toilets.⁷³ The gender parity index for the year 2021-22 was found to be lower than desirable at less than one in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of the upper primary school level. The state government has responded to this issue by delaying the payment made for the welfare of the tribal and girls students in the state. Last year, several tribal schools alleged that school headmasters, teachers, and staff had to shell out money from their pockets to pay for arranging the food meals entitled to the students as the funds were delayed leading to mismanagement and the quality of food being served to students being compromised.⁷⁴ Yet again, schools complain that funds for female SC/ST students' encouragement to continue their education have been delayed in a prolonged manner by the government.⁷⁵ This showcases the seriousness of the government in addressing critical issues such as inequality among school students. It is the same government that is opposing new NEP that can enhance the learning experiences and make those joyful and inclusive.

Nearly 50,000 students absent during Plus-Two language paper

School Education department taking steps to make them attend supplementary exams, says School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi

March 16, 2023 07:40 pm | Updated 09:53 pm IST - CHENNAI

Source: The Hindu

The state government's failure to address such critical issues was one of the reasons behind as many as 5.6 percent of school students i.e., nearly 50,000 not attending one of the exams held last year. DMK leader and School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi admitted that students were unwilling to attend the exam as students and

parents in many cases found the learning in schools to be meaningless.⁷⁶

3 Teachers denied Rightful Employment

3.1 Large Number of Teaching Positions lying vacant

To improve the quality of education in the state, it is important to ensure that there are a sufficient number of teaching staff employed in the school. The DMK government has veered in a different direction of ignoring the job-related grievances of people in the education sector, after promising to take the matter on priority at the time of 2021 elections.

“Necessary steps will be taken to ensure youngsters who have cleared the TET exam and have not been allotted a job since 2013 get a job at the earliest. Legal recommendations will be made to provide lifetime eligibility on TET qualification certificates.”

-DMK Key Poll Promise in 2021

Status: Not delivered

There were about 18,862 teaching vacancies reported as of FY22, with the reason cited as delayed hiring by the Teachers Recruitment Board. This was even when the person-in-position of teachers in government schools was less by about 31,490 in numbers as per the required norm.

Table 4.2: Sanctioned post and PIP (2021-22)

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	Sanctioned strength	Person-in-position	Vacant	Vacant (Percentage)
1	Headmaster (HSS)	2,922	2,509	413	14
2	Headmaster (HS)	3,116	2,668	448	14
3	Post Graduate Assistant	26,717	24,042	275	10
4	Bachelor of Teaching Assistant	56,275	52,127	4,148	7
5	Secondary Grade Assistant	7,137	5,711	1,426	20
6	Physical Education Teacher	4,831	3,409	1,422	29
7	Bachelor of Teaching (BT) Tamil Pandit	10,218	4,499	5,719	56
8	Bachelor of Teaching Other Pandit*	178	99	79	44
9	Computer Instructor	1,967	1,697	270	14
10	Vocational Instructor	2,098	949	1,149	55
11	Special Teachers**	3,455	2,342	1,113	32
	Total	1,18,914	1,00,052	18,862	15.87

Source: CAG

3.2 Teachers Fighting for Permanent Jobs

“Part-time art, music, and physical education teachers will be considered for permanent employment in the Department of School Education.”

- DMK Key Poll Promise in 2021

Status: Not delivered

DMK made the promise to provide permanent employment to art, music, and physical education teachers only to woo their votes and then abandon them post winning the election. For the past two years, the teachers have been protesting for their demand of permanency to be fulfilled by the government, only for it to have fallen on deaf ears. As of April FY23, around 10,200 part-time government teachers still await employment permanency and job security benefits, many of whom were hired in 2011.^{77 78} If the DMK government had the political will to address their grievances, it could have easily accommodated these teachers as a large number of teaching jobs remain vacant. As many as 4,843 vocational students were affected found CAG Report 2022 as the government failed to fill the vacant posts of Vocational Training Providers (VTPs) in schools.

3.3 Teachers complained about low salaries and delayed payments

Thousands of teachers in Tamil Nadu recently organized strikes as they complained of low salaries among other issues. Many teachers also complain of their salaries being paid with a delay of a month or more. Another issue faced by teachers in the state is that of disparity in pay for equal work. Secondary-grade teachers complain that in 2009 when the DMK government was in power, it passed an order that decreased the salaries of teachers recruited on or after June 1, 2009, by Rs 3,000 less. This has caused a disparity in the payment of salaries to teachers doing the same job. In October 2023, the media reported that more than 70 protesting teachers were admitted to hospital as their health deteriorated during the strike.⁷⁹ Despite this, the only assurance from DMK has been to look into this matter post-election adding to the hopelessness of the teachers.⁸⁰



VI. Meteoric Rise in Corruption

India's federal structure has been designed in such a way that expands the scope of democracy enjoyed by the people. However, the outcomes of such a system depend heavily on the political will of leaders both at the centre and state and the resulting nature of the relationship between both. There is a reason why a double-engine government is preferred in states as it leads to greater political cohesion and better decision-making. DMK mainly being a regional party cannot provide such a set-up on its own. But the party certainly has enjoyed some form of power at the centre level by forming alliances with the Congress during the Lok Sabha elections. But instead of using its political power in the previous national government to further the development of Tamil Nadu, DMK used its influence to allegedly amass huge wealth through a series of nationwide corruption. In its ruling state, the number of corruption cases allegedly perpetrated by its party members are numerous. The main suspect in the biggest corruption case in the political history of India, the 2G scam, was a DMK leader who was given a berth in the cabinet by UPA at the time it was the ruling party in India. Even Kanimozhi, the daughter of M. Karunanidhi, the late DMK patriarch was one of the prime accused in the case.

2G Scam: A DMK legacy in corruption

In 2009, a major scandal came to public attention that shook the nation – 2G Scam. The scam was proven to be the final nail in the coffin of a weakening UPA government since its re-emergence in national politics in the early 2000s. By 2014, the party became so fragile as its unpopularity grew manifold due to public anger since the scam which robbed people of an amount more than then defence budget, had come to the limelight.⁸¹ As a consequence, Congress failed even to defend at least 45 seats in Lok Sabha.⁸² The main accused in the case was DMK leader, A. Raja who was serving as the then Union Telecom Minister in the UPA government with the support of former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi and his daughter Kanimozhi.

A. Raja was arrested in 2011 on the charges of cheating, forgery, and conspiracy.⁸³ The major allegation on A. Raja was of allocating licenses for telecom spectrum, a scarce resource, in exchange for bribes. A total of 122 licenses of 2G spectrum were fixed at the year 2001 prices instead of 2008 prices even when India needed to prioritize maximizing its revenue so that it could spend more to revive an economy that was grappling with the impacts of the Global Recession at that time. Moreover, the licenses were allotted in a manner that allowed license owning companies to make illegally huge profits for which it has been alleged that A. Raja and his party members received kickbacks. The allocation of the spectrum at market prices had been advised by TRAI but Raja disregarded the recommendation and allowed the distribution on a First-come-First-serve basis at throwaway prices, which the Supreme Court later termed as unconstitutional and illegal. To benefit certain private players to maximize their gains at the cost of others, cutoff dates to receive applications were brought down arbitrarily. Raja is alleged to have used his wife's bank account in Mauritius to deposit his kickbacks and is also accused of facilitating the 200-crore bribe from Swan Telecom to Kalaingar TV, the propaganda arm of the DMK party.⁸⁴ The estimated cost to the national exchequer has been Rs 1.76 lakh crore.⁸⁵



Source: Moneycontrol

Supreme Court later had to cancel the licenses awarded in this case, however, the repercussions were far too intense and it is widely believed that the Indian economy suffered nearly a decade of economic growth lost. At present, A. Raja who is enjoying political indemnity due to his closeness with M. Karunanidhi continues to have good influence in the DMK party. The actions of A. Raja was defended by Late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Karunanidhi several times. This was partly because his daughter, Kanimozhi's name was also involved in this case. It is widely believed that A. Raja took instructions from Kanimozhi. M Karunanidhi's other daughter S Selvi also offered to become a witness in the case to establish the involvement of her accused sister.⁸⁶

Illegal Telephone Exchange Scam: Dynasty Politics and Corruption go hand-in-hand

Before A. Raja was appointed by UPA to serve as telecom Minister in the Union Cabinet, another DMK leader, Dayanidhi Maran was holding the portfolio charge. Maran, the grandnephew of Karunanidhi was only replaced by A. Raja as a blatant misuse of power by him was unearthed by investigating agencies. It is allegedly found that when Maran was a telecom minister in the UPA government, he made Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) BSNL to install more than 700 high-end telecom lines at his residence in a corrupt and unethical manner.⁸⁷ The telecom lines were kept deliberately off-record to avoid paying the bills and were used to benefit Dayanidhi Maran's brother SUN TV business through uplink. The estimated loss to the national exchequer in this case is about Rs 1.78 crore. Not only that the scandal nearly choked the telecom PSU BSNL to death by making it suffer huge losses incurred in this case.

At the time, Maran was given charge of the telecom portfolio which was in 2004, telecom PSUs were generating nearly Rs 10,000 crores in profit but he brought down those

PSUs to loss-making ventures.⁸⁸ In addition to looting public money, Dayanidhi Maran was also accused of creating national security risks by not making the network public which could have allowed its misuse for anti-national activities. However, shielded by the DMK party, Dayanidhi continues to enjoy political power which is now being misused by him to polarise people based on region, religion, education, and profession. In one of his statements that caused a large controversy and uproar, Maran suggested that those who are Hindi Speaking such as in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh end up doing menial labour work in Tamil Nadu to cause a rift among fellow Indians.⁸⁹ Being the grandnephew of Karunanidhi, Maran believes he is shielded against charges of corruption or hate speeches. It also hints at the incompetency of I.N.D.I.A alliance to govern the nation properly, with their allies such as DMK openly advocating a mindset that could endanger the fraternity among Indian states.

Disproportionate Assets (DA) Case: The apparent case of political power misuse for personal gains

Between 2006 and 2011 when DMK was in power, it appointed K. Ponmudy as the Minister for higher education and mining.⁹⁰ Using his position, Ponmudy amassed huge wealth in a corrupt manner. It was found the former State Minister along with his wife accumulated disproportionate assets. While the minister reported to have Rs 2.71 crore in April 2006, his wealth grew manifold by May 2010 during which he had earned Rs 6.27 crore.⁹¹ The investigation agencies found that the couple was unable to provide information regarding a legitimate source of income for as much as Rs 1.75 crore. Last year, the Minister was found guilty in the case. The Madras High Court in its judgment announced a three-year jail term for the Minister and his wife. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 50 lakh each on the convicted couple.

Similarly, Tamil Nadu ministers Thangam Thennarasu and KKSSR Ramachandran have also allegedly been found to possess disproportionate assets for which they are being summoned by the court. Thennarasu who served as State Finance Minister in the present Tamil Nadu government led by DMK was dismissed by a special court. He was found to have DA worth 74.58 lakh which he accumulated during the period 2006-11 when he was holding the position of State Education Minister. Likewise, DA worth Rs 1.49 lakh is speculated to have been earned by KKSSR Ramachandran through fraudulent means when he served as State Health Minister and Minister for backward classes.⁹²

Illegal Sand Mining Cases: A mafia shielded by DMK

DMK MP, Gautham Sigamani who is also the son of convicted DMK Former Higher Education Minister K. Ponmudy is one of the accused in the illegal sand mining case. As per the case, when Ponmudy was Minister for Mines, he issued various illegal sand mining licenses causing losses worth Rs 28 crore to the state exchequer.⁹³ Gautham Sigamani was also issued a license along with relatives of Ponmudy and some benami entities through fraudulent means. During its investigation, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) complained that DMK had been involved in shielding the accused hinting at the possibility of the DMK government helping the sand mining mafia to operate. Commenting in this context, ED said that DMK interference “is a clear attempt.....to thwart an ongoing

investigation/ enquiry into the offense of Money Laundering and the proceeds of crime.⁹⁴ Some government officials in their statements said that they were asked not to cooperate with ED by Duraimurugan, the Minister for Water Resources.⁹⁵ Illegal sand mining is so pervasive in Tamil Nadu that the total estimated loss calculated by ED as of November 2023, stood at Rs 4,730 crore while the department revenue is not even one percent of this amount.⁹⁶

When Corruption Stems from Favouritism: A Case against I. Periyasamy

Senior DMK leader, a six-time MLA, and former State Minister for Rural Development, I. Periyasamy is facing trial against his misuse of power to provide Favors to those close to the party.⁹⁷ As per the allegations, Ganesan, the personal security officer of the late Chief Minister M Karunanidhi was allotted a high-income group plot by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB) through procedural irregularities. Such corruption cases highlight, how prevalent dynasty politics and favoritism are within the party whose goal seems to benefit the people close to it through fraudulent and corrupt means.

Hypocrisy of I.N.D.I.A alliance: When Congress declared DMK 'corrupt'

While DMK leaders have committed several alleged corruptions through an alliance with Congress, there was a time when Congress openly admitted to DMK being a corrupt party. On January 31st, 1976, the DMK government was dismissed on the charges of corruption by Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It was alleged that the DMK government had rigged the tenders for providing piped drinking water in Chennai to a firm allegedly close to Karunanidhi's nephew Murasoli Maran.⁹⁸ The Sarkaria Commission which was then investigating the corruption cases against DMK found Karunanidhi partially guilty in many of the cases.⁹⁹ The Sarkaria Commission was formed under Supreme Court Judge Ranjit Singh Sarkaria in February 1976.

After probing the corruption allegations against M. Karunanidhi and some of his erstwhile ministers, it termed evidence against them "cogent, convincing, and reliable". The report produced by the Commission highlighted several irregularities and fraud committed by DMK. Among others, the probe found that a firm of aviation operators paid bribes totaling nearly Rs. 5.3 lakhs to Karunanidhi and his colleague, the then Agriculture Minister, Dharmalingam, for an aerial spraying contract. Dharmalingam accumulated huge wealth comprising land and jewelry worth over Rs. 3.8 lakhs through his involvement. In addition, he was also given partnership rights in a textbook firm and enjoyed enough political influence to intervene in a murder case investigation to protect the accused who were his friends. Similarly, the probe found that the Industries Minister, Madhavan, was involved in the misuse of a loan advanced to a party legislator for industrial use. Karunanidhi himself was found to have violated the prescribed procedure and established norms in a brewery license allocation case as it was he, who made the recommendation.



VII. Anti-Sanatan Politics and Worsening Law & Order in Tamil Nadu

In the recent past, Udhayanidhi Stalin - a sitting minister of Youth Welfare and Sports, and the son of the serving Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.K. Stalin, made a derogatory remark, comparing Sanatana Dharma with diseases like Malaria and Dengue, and called for its eradication.

The recent occurrences and the emergence of sectarian politics practised by the DMK in Tamil Nadu politics has been very alarming. In the recent past, Udhayanidhi Stalin - a sitting minister of Youth Welfare, and Sports, and son of the serving Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.K. Stalin, made a derogatory remark comparing Sanatana Dharma with diseases like Malaria and Dengue and called for its eradication.¹⁰⁰ The DMK high command went ahead



A demolished temple on the banks of Muthanankulam, Tamil Nadu

without taking any action against him, rather safe-guarding his statements and coming out openly in his support. A sitting minister of Tamil Nadu government, and a representative of a political dynasty with an important charge of Youth Welfare, cast an attack on millions of Hindus in the state of Tamil Nadu and beyond. This seemed to reflect a disturbing but familiar hallmark of the DMK blueprint to work against Hindu interests, thereby reducing them to second-class citizens in their very homes.

Udhayanidhi Stalin's Comments Against 'Sanatana Dharma' Amount To Hate Against Specific Community : Madras High Court

Source: LiveLaw

Moreover, despite the Madras High Court classifying the comments as 'hate,' the timid reaction by the DMK leadership, which, rather than condemning the statement, justified it with myriad illogical caveats, is another scathing attack on the dignity and personal beliefs of Hindu voters, who had shown their trust in the DMK during the last state elections. Moreover, this was not a stand-alone incident. Even M. Karunanidhi, the former CM of Tamil Nadu had a hard-core anti-Sanatan stand and constantly questioned Hindu gods like Rama and their authenticity. In lieu of implementing his dream project - the Sethusamudram project, he even went to court to prove that Ramayana is a work of fiction, and Rama never existed in history- this in itself was seen as not just an insult to Sanatana Dharma, but also a threat to Tamil culture, and history. It was a planned attempt to change the narrative and misguide millions of Tamilians in hating their own grand heritage,

and culture. Moreover, the former Chief Minister Karunanidhi also went on to call Ram a lie as big as the Himalayas, and reportedly remarked 'Hey Ram! I will always be your detractor'.¹⁰¹

The irony is that this was being said in a state with the highest number of Hindu temples¹⁰² and important sites of significance mentioned in the Ramayana including Dhanushkodi and the Rameshwaram temple visited by millions of devotees from across the country and the globe.

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Another statement by a sitting DMK MP, wherein he compared being a practising Hindu to being a Shudra and an offspring of a prostitute.¹⁰³ This statement not only throws light on open Hindu hatred, but also on casteism and misogyny, deeply rooted in the ruling DMK and its leaders' ethos and ideology. Post such statements, inaction by the top party leadership is in itself a silent yet strong sign of approval. The Anti-Sanatan DMK does not stop just at statements. Their anti-Sanatan actions and policies have been much louder. The razing down of century-old temples, which are a symbol of Tamil pride and Hindu unity, is a testimony to the same.

Demolished century-old temples in my constituency: DMK MP in now-viral speech

"I demolished them knowing that I wouldn't get the votes. But I also knew how to get the votes," the MP reportedly is heard saying in the clip.

Source: IndiaToday

TR Balu, a DMK MP's leaked tape is a testimony to how anti-Sanatan policy is carried out by the DMK unapologetically.¹⁰⁴ The list of temples demolished is endless: The 300-year-old temple near Basin Bridge in Chennai, the 200-year-old temple in Madurai, 3 temples in Coimbatore, a temple in Varadharajapuram, Sri Narasimha Anjaneyar Temple in Chennai among many others are some prominent examples. The demolition of Hindu sites, that were built as repositories of culture, and tradition, centuries ago is being targeted under the DMK regime, which is comparable to the Mughal regime in India, which witnessed the destruction of several temples, and the use of timid justification by pro-Mughal historians without any factual foundation, or common logic in a similar fashion.

Supreme Court pulls up Tamil Nadu govt over 'ban' on live telecast of Ram Temple ceremony

The recent blanket ban on live screening of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony being conducted at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya¹⁰⁵ is also a testimony to the anti-Sanatan policy of the DMK.

To prove further, the state is home to the maximum number of 108 Divyadesams, as mentioned in the works of Alvars and many other saints from across the state and beyond. Divyadesams are Vaisnava temples, with most of them being in India, one being in Nepal, and two being outside the earthly realm, as mentioned in the ancient works of Tamil saints, and poets. The state is home to over 80 of the 108 Divyadesams or temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu, and Goddess Lakshmi. These Divyadesams are important to Tamil Nadu's history and its tourism industry. Further, they are symbols of architectural marvels that came up under the reign of brave Tamil Kings who were not only able administrators but also patrons of art and literature, much contrary to the current regime in Tamil Nadu.

Although maximum Divyadesams are home to this state and contribute majorly to tourism, state revenue still is bluntly ignored by the state administration, and management and the state government manages the funds of the temples through the Hindu Charitable and Endowments Act. This is the same vicious policy that was once implemented by the British East India Company in India 200 years ago, and thousands of temples are still struggling with funds, with many priest families running temples by selling off their ancestral lands just to safeguard their age-old culture, heritage, and tradition.

The Divyadesams and their importance have been elucidated in a variety of literary texts, and historical records, many Divyadesams also drive the local economy of the cities, towns, and villages in which they are located. For instance, a small town in Tamil Nadu called Mahabalipuram, or Mammalapuram as it is widely known, has gained international recognition and is a popular spiritual destination because of the presence of a Divyadesam - the Thirukadalmalai Sri Sthala Sayana Perumala Temple, which also finds its place in the Naalayira Divya Prabhandam, as described by the Alvars. This place rose to quick international recognition post the visit of the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi accompanied by the then-Chinese Premier Xi Jinping.¹⁰⁶ Such efforts by the Central Government at the centre, spearheaded by the BJP is a testimony to how the BJP-led Union Government has remained committed to reviving Tamil pride and securing Tamil culture, much to the disliking of the DMK government. These steps have ensured the state's global positioning and promoted local economy of regions within the state, thereby leading to economic empowerment of the masses at all levels. On the other hand, the DMK is committed to insulting the Hindu faith.

For instance, the DMK government planned on constructing toilets near the main shrine of the Divyadesam.¹⁰⁷ However, this move was heavily criticised by the locals and protests were undertaken. But, such incidents speak volumes of not only the anti-

Sanatan sentiments of the DMK government of a state with nearly 80 percent Hindus, but also reeks of the DMK's schemes and conspiracies to insult Tamil heritage and slowly change or degrade the grand Tamil history to suit certain communities and parochial interests. The ruling party has a history of such incidents right from the Chief-Ministership of Karunanidhi, who was in power for around two decades, to M.K Stalin's current tenure since 2021.

The roots of the party might be secularism on paper, but in practice, it is anti-Sanatan sentiment, selective targeting, and pseudo-secularism. The very nature of DMK is violent and blood-marked. It is evident from their vicious campaign and genocidal call against Hindus when their sitting cabinet minister compared Santana Dharma with malaria and dengue and remarked that it must be eradicated and the party's high command and alliance partners of DMK did not voice out discomfort rather came out in support of the statement in their ways justified it.

Moreover, this is not the first time such a violent remark was made. Earlier, another senior DMK functionary A. Raja called the Hindu religion a big menace not only to India but to the entire world¹⁰⁸ - such statements not only pose a serious threat to India's secular fabric but also pose a severe threat to Tamil Nadu's culture and societal unity, which is on the brink of collapse under a flawed leadership, who demean the Hindu religion and Tamil culture on one hand, and yet demand votes from over 80 per cent of the Hindu population in the state.

The involvement of religion and caste in political discourse, discussion, and debate has been perpetually a phenomenon in India since Independence, with political parties appeasing their respective vote banks and getting embroiled in caste and religion-driven politics. However, the DMK in Tamil Nadu goes a dangerous step further. They not only involve themselves in politics of this kind but they also work against the cultural fabric and unity of India that has been carefully woven by freedom fighters and architects of the Indian Constitution over the past. Their Aryan-Dravidian divide theory, their stance on Ramayana, and their strong anti-Hindi heartland sentiment reeks of separatism. Such activities spearheaded by the DMK are a threat not only to the identity of Hindus in the state but also a threat to National unity. In a recent development, the DMK issued a blanket ban on the live screening of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya earlier this year.

No historical proof for existence of Lord Ram: DMK

This combined with the long-standing hate for Lord Ram propagated by the DMK¹⁰⁹ is in itself against Tamil culture, and tradition as Ayodhya in itself is a Divyadesam as elucidated in the works of the Alvars, and there has been a long-standing tradition of Tamil saints visiting the Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya - the historic visit of Madhura Kavi Alvar to Ayodhya and Mathura is an example of the same.

The North-South Divide Politics

On every occasion, the DMK never fails to use the biased and largely debunked Aryan invasion theory to create an environment of Aryan vs Dravidian. This not only creates

DMK MP's Hindi speakers clean toilets in Tamil Nadu remark goes viral after four years; triggers row

Source: Deccan Herald

differences between citizens of the same country but brews a sense of fanaticism, especially in young people, which often results in violent uproars and consequences. The DMK has used derogatory remarks as a poll plank to incite excitement among people, and brew hatred. Their sitting MP on record went on to say that people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh who study Hindi, come to Tamil Nadu to clean their toilets,¹¹⁰ such derogatory remarks are not only against the idea of equality but also against the idea of a nation as it brews hatred among countrymen which is further used to widen the gaps, by utilising the fanaticism that takes birth as a consequence. This in itself is against the ancient Tamil culture which believed in unity in diversity devoid of any differences and this can be validated from the life, and teachings of great Tamil saints like Sri Ramanujacharya who preached the gospel of equality, and travelled across the length and breadth of India including northern parts like Kashi, and Kashmir. Moreover, in the works of Alvars, it can be noted that several Divyadesams are located in the northern part of India including states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Gujarat. This is a testimony to how India was viewed as one unified nation by Tamil saints, and how the disastrous and separatist ideas spearheaded by the DMK are fundamentally against Tamil teachings and age-old values. Recently a DMK sitting Member of Parliament, went on to say on record at a gathering that India is not a nation or a country, it is a subcontinent that is made up of several nations, he further went on to say that Tamil Nadu is a nation, a country, Odisha is another nation, and likewise Delhi is another nation and several nations come together to form the Indian subcontinent. Such misleading remarks, and misguided statements are sure to ignite a secessionist call in the country which shall prove to be disastrous.

The DMK time, and again has used the North-South divide as a poll plank to woo voters by creating an uneasy atmosphere of fanaticism, and hate-politics. This identity-driven politics coupled with the fact that the DMK has an alliance with the Indian National Congress that was part of the government in Bihar, and Punjab among other northern states, is a testimony to DMK's hypocrisy, and the ignorance visibly exhibited by the Congress to secure an alliance in the state with the same party that condemns and demeans a majority of the Indian population that the Indian National Congress seeks to woo up in the Northern part of India.

Stand on Jallikattu

Jallikattu is an ancient bull-taming sport that has been in practice in Tamil Nadu for centuries and forms an important part of Tamil tradition, and history. However, the central government headed by the Congress party had passed a notification in 2011 that led to a ban on the ancient sport.¹¹¹ This was the same UPA government that also had the

support of the DMK and, in fact, several DMK leaders also held top posts in the UPA-led central government in 2011 hence the ban on Jallikattu must be viewed as a collective decision of the then UPA government of which DMK as an important alliance partner. Moreover, the NDA government in Tamil Nadu passed an ordinance to continue the sport in the state.¹¹² Moving ahead, in 2016 the Congress party manifesto called for banning the ancient sport, this in itself casts doubts on both the Congress party, and DMK who claim to be guardians of Tamil culture and tradition, but in practice are oppressors of the same, and seek to destroy it.

Tamil Nadu

Won't allow anyone to ruin Tamil traditions like Jallikattu, says PM Modi

Source: New Indian Express

Way ahead

The people of Tamil Nadu must realize that DMK is fundamentally an anti-Sanatan party in nature, and an elitist party in practice whose goal is to come to power even at the cost of ruining Tamil heritage and doing away with Tamil values which form a core part, and inalienable component of Tamil culture, and pride. The DMK seemingly also harbours secessionist demands and justifies its anti-Sanatana stand time, and again. Yet, one must understand that close to the elections, the DMK utilizes its north-south divide theory, creates a poll plank based on lies, and misinformation and throws at people unnecessary and imaginative fears of Hindi imposition to misguide, mislead, and misuse people thereby mobilizing a voter base. Slowly but steadily and surely, the people of the state are realizing the hidden agendas of the DMK and will vote differently in the upcoming elections.

Worsening Law and Order

The state of law and order in Tamil Nadu under the governance of the DMK government has been a cause for concern. There has been a noticeable deterioration in the situation, particularly evidenced by the alarming increase in the sale of ganja and other narcotic drugs. Despite repeated occurrences, the police have failed to take decisive action, allowing these substances to proliferate freely. This ease of access to drugs has contributed significantly to the rise in criminal activities across the state.

Efforts such as Operation Ganja were initiated to address the issue, but unfortunately, they have not yielded the desired results. Before assuming power, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin pledged to oversee law and order directly and ensure strict punishment for wrongdoers. However, reality paints a starkly different picture. Instead of improvement, the law-and-order situation has regrettably worsened under the current administration.

The state's police force, once regarded with esteem akin to the renowned Scotland Yard, has suffered a noticeable decline in its standards. This decline has not escaped public notice, leading to widespread dissatisfaction. Rather than upholding the law impartially,

the police appear to be endorsing the government’s misleading narratives, further eroding public trust.

Further exacerbating the situation is the widespread occurrence of criminal cases among government officials. Surprisingly, a significant majority of ministers—88%—have declared criminal cases against themselves, with half of them facing serious charges. Such statistics only serve to deepen the public’s apprehension about the integrity of those in power.¹¹³

Thus, the law-and-order situation in Tamil Nadu under the DMK government has reached a critical juncture. It demands immediate attention and effective measures to restore public safety and confidence in the administration.

Rising Crime rates in the state

According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Tamil Nadu witnessed the highest number of murders of senior citizens in 2022. This alarming trend reflects a broader rise in crimes targeting women, children, and elderly individuals across the state.

In 2022, there were 201 reported cases of senior citizens being murdered, indicating a significant increase compared to 183 in 2020¹¹⁴. Additionally, crimes against senior citizens surged, with 2,376 cases registered in 2022, up from 1,581 in 2020. Notably, Tamil Nadu ranked third nationwide in crimes against senior citizens.¹¹⁵



The state also saw a concerning rise in crimes against children, with 6,580 cases reported in 2022, compared to 4,338 cases in 2020. Moreover, Tamil Nadu ranked third in the country for cases registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, with 5,026 reported instances.



Furthermore, crimes against women remained prevalent, with 9,207 cases reported in 2022 and 6,630 cases in 2020. These figures include distressing instances such as dowry-related murders and cases of rape and murder. Additionally, 1,043 cases were registered against husbands and relatives for mistreating women.¹¹⁶

This disturbing pattern of escalating crime underscores the challenges faced by Tamil Nadu’s residents, particularly vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, women, and children.

DMK MLA's Family Accused of Exploiting Dalit Worker¹¹⁷

In January 2024, a distressing incident unfolded in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district involving an 18-year-old Dalit woman who was allegedly abused while working as a domestic helper in Chennai. The situation took a political twist as it emerged that she was employed by the son and daughter-in-law of a prominent DMK MLA, Karunanidhi.

Tamil Nadu

Dalit girl alleges assault by DMK MLA's family in Chennai

Anu was employed as a domestic worker by Pallavaram DMK MLA / Karunanidhi's son Anto and daughter-in-law Merlina when she was 17 years old. On January 16, she was admitted to the hospital with multiple injuries.*

During the Pongal festival holidays, the young woman returned to her family in Ulundurpet, seeking medical attention for injuries sustained during her employment. She visited a government hospital where she received treatment for abrasions, prompting the hospital to record the incident in their accident registry. Subsequently, the Ulundurpet police informed their counterparts in Adyar, Chennai, about the matter.

The woman shared her harrowing experiences, stating that she had been subjected to severe abuse, including physical assaults with objects like slippers, spoons, brooms, and mops, resulting in bloody wounds all over her body. She highlighted that the daughter-in-law of the DMK MLA inflicted more torture upon her, even going as far as cutting her hair. Despite being promised a monthly salary of Rs.16,000, she revealed that she only received Rs. 5,000.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) swiftly intervened, demanding a detailed report and a copy of the FIR within two days. However, DMK leader Karunanidhi remained unresponsive to inquiries from media outlets, raising concerns about the party's handling of the situation and its leaders' silence in the face of allegations of misgovernance.

This incident sheds light on the plight of vulnerable workers, particularly those from marginalized communities, who often face exploitation and abuse in their workplace. The involvement of individuals linked to the ruling party further underscores the need for accountability and transparency in governance. The lack of response from DMK leaders only adds to the perception of negligence and indifference towards addressing issues of social justice and protecting the rights of all citizens, regardless of their background.

DMK Members Arrested for Harassing Women Constable¹¹⁸

In January 2023, two members of the DMK party were arrested for allegedly harassing a female police constable during a public meeting in Chennai. The constable filed a complaint at the Valasaravakkam Police Station, detailing the harassment she endured from the DMK youth wing members during the event.

Chennai Police Arrest 2 DMK Members For Sexually Harassing Woman Cop

On Sunday, a complaint was lodged by the woman constable at the Valasaravakkam Police Station in this regard.

Despite the complaint, when the police attempted to apprehend the accused, they faced resistance from other DMK members. Ultimately, the constable withdrew her complaint the following day.

This incident isn't isolated. On December 31, 2022, two DMK functionaries allegedly harassed another female police officer while she was on duty at a party gathering in Virugambakkam. Notably, this event was attended by prominent DMK leaders like MP Kanimozhi, Health Minister M. Subramaniam, and MLA Prabhakar Raja, and was organized to commemorate the centenary of former party General Secretary K. Anbazhagan.

These events raise serious concerns about the conduct of DMK members and the party's leadership. The repeated instances of harassment of female police officers reflect poorly on the party's commitment to women's safety and dignity. Moreover, the interference by DMK members when law enforcement attempted to uphold justice highlights a culture of impunity and disregard for the rule of law within the party ranks.

Such behavior not only undermines the credibility of the DMK but also reflects a broader issue of misgovernance and lack of accountability within the party. It is imperative for political leaders, especially those in positions of power, to uphold the principles of integrity and respect for the law, rather than condoning or engaging in unlawful behavior.

Controversial Remarks by Udhayanidhi Stalin spark Social Unrest¹¹⁹ | ¹²⁰

Udhayanidhi Stalin, a prominent figure in Tamil Nadu's political landscape as a Cabinet Minister and son of the Chief Minister, sparked controversy with his inflammatory remarks at a public event. During his speech, he voiced his opinion that Sanatan Dharma, the religion practiced by the majority of India's population, should be eradicated. This statement caused widespread social unrest across the country.

'Sanatana dharma like malaria, dengue...': MK Stalin's son Udhayanidhi sparks row

Udhayanidhi Stalin, the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, triggered a row when he linked Sanatana dharma with "malaria" and "dengue" while calling for its eradication.

In response to Udhayanidhi's remarks, Hindu saints in Delhi took to the streets in protest, expressing vehement disapproval of his public stance. They symbolically demonstrated their anger by burning effigies of Udhayanidhi. The protesters, organized under the banner of the Delhi Sant Mahamandal, displayed placards condemning Udhayanidhi Stalin and other political figures who echoed similar sentiments or supported the DMK leader. Udhayanidhi's provocative statement not only offended the sentiments of a

significant portion of the population but also stirred communal sentiments, risking social harmony and unity.

Moreover, the fact that Udhayanidhi is a member of the Cabinet and the son of the Chief Minister raises questions about the accountability and responsibility of leaders in positions of power. Such remarks coming from a prominent political figure not only reflect poorly on the DMK leadership but also raise concerns about the governance and ethical conduct within the party.

The incident serves as a stark reminder of the need for responsible leadership and the consequences of inflammatory rhetoric. It calls for introspection within the DMK leadership and emphasizes the importance of upholding principles of secularism, tolerance, and respect for all faiths in a diverse and pluralistic society like India.

Unwarranted Statements Made by DMK leaders

Once seen as a symbol of forward-thinking politics, the DMK government in Tamil Nadu is now caught up in a string of problems caused by unnecessary comments made by its leaders.

In December 2023, DMK MP Senthil Kumar's derogatory remark in Parliament referring to northern Indian states as "Gaumutra states" sparked outrage and division across the country. This insensitive statement not only offended people from those regions but also exposed the underlying prejudice within the party ranks.¹²¹

Similarly, DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran's disparaging comments on a public platform, insinuating that individuals from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh only knew Hindi and migrated to Tamil Nadu for menial work, reeked of elitism and discrimination. Such divisive rhetoric undermines the spirit of unity and inclusivity that the DMK once championed¹²².

In January 2023, DMK leader Shivaji Krishnamoorthy's abusive tirade against Tamil Nadu's governor and the then Leader of Opposition showcased a blatant disregard for decorum and civility. His threats of violence and crude remarks about masculinity not only tarnished the party's image but also raised serious concerns about the erosion of democratic values under the DMK government.¹²³

Adding fuel to the fire, Tamil Nadu Higher Education Minister K Ponmudy's statement about the I.N.D.I Alliance for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections being formed to fight against Sanatan Dharma further exacerbated religious tensions and polarized the electorate. Such divisive politics only serves to deepen societal divisions and undermine communal harmony.¹²⁴

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'INDIA Alliance Formed To Fight Against Sanatan Dharma': DMK Minister Stirs Row

Tamil Nadu Higher Education Minister K Ponmudy said the INDIA alliance for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections has been formed to fight against Sanatan Dharma. This comes days after MK Stalin's son Udhayanidhi Stalin compared Sanatan Dharma to diseases.

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These unwarranted statements not only reflect poorly on the leadership of the DMK but also highlight a worrying trend of intolerance, bigotry, and divisiveness within the party. Instead of fostering unity and progress, the DMK government's governance appears marred by inflammatory rhetoric and divisive politics, eroding the trust and confidence of the people they were elected to serve.

Illegal Shark Trade¹²⁵

The illegal trade in shark body parts has become a major issue in Tamil Nadu, with the state accounting for nearly 65% of such activities, according to a recent analysis by TRAFFIC and WWF-India. The study also revealed that approximately 16,000 kilograms of shark fins were confiscated between 2010 and 2022, making up nearly 80% of all shark-related items seized. Additionally, substantial quantities of shark cartilage and teeth were also intercepted.

Tamil Nadu tops illegal trade in shark body parts

Fins constituted about 80% of the shark-derived products seized, according to an analysis by TRAFFIC and WWF-India

Sharks play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems as top predators. However, overfishing and low biological productivity make them vulnerable to extinction. Despite this, only a fraction of the shark species in India are protected under wildlife conservation laws.

The illegal trade in sharks poses a serious threat to their conservation, both in India and globally. One of the main challenges in curbing this trade is the misdeclaration of species on permits, making it difficult to differentiate legal and illegal trade. Insufficient monitoring mechanisms further compound this problem.

To aid law enforcement efforts, TRAFFIC has developed 3D-printed replica fins to help identify dried and unprocessed fins. Additionally, a new identification guidebook has been published for 11 commercially traded shark and ray species. These resources aim to assist enforcement agencies in identifying and combating illegal trade activities.

However, despite these efforts, the situation remains dire, reflecting poorly on the state's law and order under the DMK government. The government's failure to effectively control the illegal trade in shark body parts highlights a significant governance issue. Measures to address this problem must be prioritized to protect marine ecosystems and prevent further exploitation of endangered shark species.



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