

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF TAMIL NADU AT THE STATE LEVEL NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY CELEBRATIONS ON THE OCCASION NATIONAL VOTER'S DAY - 2020 ORGANISED BY CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, TAMIL NADU AT KALAIVANAR ARANGAM, CHENNAI ON 25.01.2020 AT 11.00 A.M**

**Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam**

**Thiru. K. Shanmugam, I.A.S.,**  
Chief Secretary to Government

**Thiru. Dr. R. Palaniswamy, I.A.S., (Retd.)**  
State Election Commissioner

**Thiru Satyabrata Sahoo, I.A.S.,**  
Chief Electoral Officer

**Thiru. Anandrao V. Patil,**  
Secretary to Governor

**Thiru. G. Prakash, I.A.S.,**  
District Election Officer and Commissioner,  
Greater Chennai Corporation

**Thirumathi R. Seethalakshmi, I.A.S.,**  
Collector, Chennai

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am indeed happy to be here for the celebration of 10<sup>th</sup> National Voters' Day being organised by Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu.

On this occasion, I wish to share some of my perceptions with this very distinguished audience. We are living in the world's largest functional Democracy. It is wonderful to recount that the citizens of India have

continuously exercised their right to vote and elected their representatives and thus enabled the democratic traditions to be strongly established. Our Constitution under Article 324 has vested the Election Commission of India with powers of superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of Electoral Rolls as well as, the conduct of all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice- President. The Election Commission of India has been very successful in conducting free fair and peaceful elections.

You are all aware that the National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated all over the country on January 25<sup>th</sup> every year since 2011 to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, which was established on this day in the year 1950. The main purpose of the National Voters' Day celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment especially for the new voters. Moreover, this day is utilized to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed electoral participation.

The importance of developing awareness among citizens for electoral participation is vital to the future of democracy. Young and future voters have been in focus across the democracies of the world for larger electoral participation through well designed electoral literacy programmes. It is of immense value to realize the significance and importance of engaging with

the young people through formal electoral literacy to make them fully prepared for their role in democracy.

The Election Commission of India has been focused on mainstreaming electoral literacy in schools, colleges and other institutions under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation programme. For this purpose, Electoral Literacy Clubs have been established in the schools and colleges. To cater to the population outside the formal Educational structure **Chunav Pathshalas** -Electoral Literacy Clubs for Communities have been established at polling station level. Electoral Literacy is being promoted through these Electoral Literacy Clubs by engaging the Indian Citizens in a neutral and non-partisan manner. Considering the above, the Election Commission of India has declared "**Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy**" as the theme for this year National Voters' Day.

I am happy to learn that in our State nearly 7,005 Electoral Literacy Clubs have been established in Schools, 1,353 Electoral Literacy Clubs in Colleges and Universities. Moreover, at the Polling Station level 25,813 Electoral Literacy Clubs for Communities have been formed. Besides this, 951 Voter Awareness Forums have also been established in public and private organizations.

Enthusiastic participation of people in the electoral process is the key to a healthy democracy. The Voter is, therefore, the central actor in any democratic election. I am happy to note that the Election Commission of India has taken various initiatives to make the process of enrolment easier and convenient and now voting experience is more people-friendly.

It is heartening to know that the Election Commission of India has taken various measures for making elections accessible for person with disabilities by enlisting the involvement of various civil-society organizations, the corporate sector, educational institutions, the media and many others. I am happy to note that, in our State nearly three lakh seventy four thousand and thirty six (3,74,036) persons with disabilities have been marked in the Electoral Roll to ensure that all of them are provided with assured minimum facilities in the Polling Stations to participate in elections. The Election Commission has strengthened it further by providing Braille enabled voter ID cards to all the visually impaired electors. I was told that every polling station location was provided with wheel chairs and at least one volunteer to facilitate participation of persons with disabilities in voting. I appreciate this good gesture of facilitating the disabled persons. Well done!

I am told that a slew of IT initiatives have been successfully rolled out by the Election Commission of India benefitting the general public as well as

the contesting candidates. For the first time, call-centres were established in all the district headquarters with a toll free number -1950 - from February 2019 to address the issues raised by the electors. I am happy to note that 3.08 lakh persons have availed this service till date.

For the first time, the Election Commission of India decided to use Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) along with EVMs in all elections at every Polling Station. Accordingly, during the recently concluded General Election to Lok Sabha 2019, VVPAT machines were used successfully in all the sixty seven thousand seven hundred and twenty (67,720) polling stations in our State and reinforced confidence in the minds of the voters.

The Election Commission of India introduced Electors Verification Programme (EVP) for having a complete error-free Electoral Roll to be used for the Special Summary Revision of Photo Electoral Rolls with reference to 01.01.2020 as the qualifying date.

I am glad to learn that Tamil Nadu has 100% coverage of its electors with Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs). It is a commendable work. I appreciate the CEO and all DEOs for this mammoth achievement.

I congratulate all the new voters of Tamil Nadu, who have enrolled in the electoral roll. I hope all of you will use this opportunity and exercise your

franchise every time in the most informed and ethical manner, free of any inducement and going beyond narrow considerations.

I am glad to recognize the outstanding contribution of the recipients of State Awards for best electoral practices in efficiently managing elections, improving voter registration, enhancing voters' participation, educating and motivating voters, and ensuring a conducive environment for people to exercise their franchise. I congratulate all those who were engaged in the management of elections for their active participation in conducting free and fair election.

To conclude, I would like to call upon all eligible citizens, and particularly youths and students to register as voters and vote with pride in every election. As this year's theme aims for stronger democracy through electoral literacy let us all unite to build a stronger democracy in India with strength and vibrancy of the electoral literacy clubs. I once again compliment the Election Commission of India for all its achievements. I also compliment the CEO, Tamil Nadu and all the DEOs of various districts and entire election machinery for the achievements and wish them the very best for the coming years.

Nandri Vanakkam.....

Jai Hind.... Jai Tamil Nadu.....