

Statement of Policy by the Hon. Sivanesathurai Santhirakanthan,
Chief Minister of the Eastern Province.

Hon. Chairman,

I am very pleased to submit to this House the Statement of Policy of the Executive of the Eastern Provincial Council. This Statement of Policy will apply to the next 18 months.

1. Rehabilitation and Resettlement

There had been large scale displacement of persons in our Province over the past quarter century. The large scale displacements have taken place from places such as Pulmottai, Tiriyai, Tennamarawadi, Mudalikulam (Morawewa) Mutur, Sampur ,Vakarai, Pullumalai, Vadamunai, Ootruchenai and Udumbankulam Many among these persons have taken up temporary residence in other Provinces as well as in Tamil Nadu in India. It is our duty to resettle these persons. We will not fail in our duty. We will resettle them in their original places of residence.

During the past quarter century, around 130,000 dwellings have either been damaged or destroyed. We will take action to repair the damaged dwellings and to replace the destroyed ones.

In order that the rehabilitation is carried out in an expeditious and transparent manner, we will be establish a Provincial Rehabilitation Authority, by statute.

I also wish to point out at this juncture that our Executive will give priority for the rehabilitation of youths, both males and females.

It is our hope that friendly countries and non-governmental organisations will assist us in our task of resettlement and rebuilding of houses.

2. Law and Order

Law and order must be maintained in order to resettle the displaced persons as well as to enable them to live without fear. We are awaiting the vesting of police powers in our Executive. The Executive under my leadership will not show any bias while maintaining law and order. It is our policy that the Police in the Province should carry out their duty without distinction among Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese.

We will be recruiting large numbers of Tamil and Muslim personnel to the Provincial Police Division. It is our policy that every police station in the Province should be served by police officers belonging to the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities.

3. Education

Several schools in the Province were affected by the war and the tsunami. We will take action to rehabilitate all of them within the next 18 months. In addition, schools which lack drinking water, toilet facilities and playgrounds will be provided these basic facilities.

In certain parts of the Province, poverty has compelled children to drop out of schools. In order to ensure 100 % success in primary education, we will implement a mid-day meal programme in those parts of the Province.

In order to reduce the population densities in certain towns of the Province, we will take action to upgrade the schools in the surrounding areas of those towns.

We are aware of the shortages of teachers in schools. My administration will pay maximum attention to filling vacancies in the cadre of teachers.

4. Higher Education

To date, higher education had been the responsibility of the Central Government. Our Executive has decided to get involved in higher education as well. We will take action to take over the campus of the Eastern University in Trincomalee, convert it to a full-fledged university with faculties of engineering, medicine, law, education, business administration, marine science, Hindu religious studies and other fields.

5. Health Care

Several health care institutions were affected by the war and the tsunami. We will take action to rehabilitate all of them.

My administration will also take action to fill all vacancies in the cadres of physicians, nurses and attendants. Further, my Executive will take action to establish a modern hospital along the lines of the Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital.

6. Vocational Education

In order to create employment opportunities among youths, both males and females, we will give priority to vocational education and training. We propose to train 3,000 youths annually in vocations.

7. Roads

The bridges at Valaiyiravu and Pattiruppu which cross the Batticaloa lagoon are damaged. We will take action to replace them. In addition, we will initiate action to construct two new bridges at Manmunai and Kurumanveli. These bridges will strengthen the links between the eastern and western coasts of the Batticaloa lagoon. We will also construct a bridge at Verugal.

We will also take action to rehabilitate all roads that come under the purview of the Provincial administration. In addition, we will extend co-operation to the Centre to rehabilitate and improve the Batticaloa- Trincomalee road, Batticaloa – Mannampitiya road, Trincomalee – Pulmotti road, Trincomalee – Habarana road, Trincomalee – Vavuniya road and the Trincomalee – Anuradhapura road.

8. Transport

The transportation within the Province is very backward. In order to improve the system to some extent, the Executive will establish a bus company through a provincial statute.

We will co-operate with the Central Government to enable two daily express train services between Trincomalee and Colombo and one daily express train service between Batticaloa and Colombo. In addition, we will take action to run a railcar service between Trincomalee and Batticaloa through Gal-Oya Junction at frequent intervals.

We will also extend our co-operation to the Central Government to modernise the railway workshop in Trincomalee so as to be able to repair railway engines, waggons and railcars in that workshop.

9. Electricity and Alternate Energy

We will establish a provincial Electricity Board to be of assistance to the Ceylon Electricity Board in its rural electrification programme.

Further, since the world market price of petroleum is increasing daily, we will also engage in the production of alternate energy.

10. Agriculture and Agrarian Services

We will diversify agriculture in the Eastern Province. Encouragement will be given for the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, lentils, sugar cane etc. in addition to paddy cultivation and we will modernise the marketing facilities. In particular, we will re-activate the "Kochchi Farm" in the west of the Batticaloa lagoon and make it a model agricultural scheme.

We will provide all facilities to the farmers including the facilities for storing paddy.

11. Animal Husbandry

As animal husbandry provides employment opportunities to women, our Executive will give priority to that sector.

We will supply higher breeds of milk cows to dairies in order to increase milk production.

The Mutur area and the area beyond the western coast of the Batticaloa lagoon will be given importance in the development of animal husbandry. Our administration will take action to establish dairies and milk processing factories in these areas.

In addition to re-activating Karadianaru dairy farm, we will also establish another one in Vinayakapuram.

12. Rural Development

We will take steps to provide employment to women through palmyrah development, development of coconut small holdings and development of cashew. We will also take steps to export the produces from these sources.

13. Local Government

We will undertake rural water supply and development of rural roads through local authorities.

We will take action to provide a modern bus terminal for the Batticaloa city.

We will amalgamate the Trincomalee Urban Council and the Uppuveli Pradeshiya Sabha and establish a Municipal Council for the Trincomalee city.

We will take action to modernize garbage disposal in all the towns of the Province.

We will conduct workshops and seminars for all focal authority members on their powers and responsibilities and help them perform their duties effectively.

14. Sports

We will encourage sports in all the schools of the province. We will also construct a stadium in the province wherein international sporting events could be conducted.

15. Land

A Panel of Experts will be appointed to prepare a report on how state land had been alienated in the Province in the past. The policy for alienation of state land in the province in the future will be formulated on the basis of that report.

The dispute over land in the Linganagar area of Trincomalee and the ownership rights of persons settled on land belonging to the Tamil University Movement in Trincomalee will be resolved by us.

16. Housing

Adhering to the principle that members of the teaching profession and persons employed in the health sector should be provided housing in close proximity to their work places, we will take action to provide them with such accommodation. We will also take steps to provide appropriate housing to other public servants near their work places.

We will invite the local private sector to invest in housing for the middle income group in the province. In like manner, we will invite Sri Lankan expatriates living abroad in respect of housing for the higher income group.

17. Tourism

We will give an impetus to tourism by the establishment of a Tourism Promotion Board through a provincial statute.

We will take action to establish tourist hotels in places like Arugam Bay, Kalladi, Passikudah, Vakarai, Alles Garden, Nilaveli, Kanniyai and Kumburupitty.

18. Irrigation

We will expedite work on the Nelu Oya feeder canal that is required to augment Mudalikulam (Morawewa) in the Trincomalee District. In addition, we will take action to raise the full supply level of Neelapanikkam Kulam.

We will also take action to rehabilitate the Unnichchai Scheme, Kirambul Anicut and Mavadi Odai Scheme in the Batticaloa District.

19. Industries

It is our primary goal to develop industries in the Province and to increase employment opportunities. We will establish industrial estates in Kappalturai, Tiriyai and Tampalakamam in the Trincomalee District and in Vakarai and Kokkatticholai in the Batticaloa District.

Garment factories will be established in Mayilankarachchai in Batticaloa and in Sampaltivu in Trincomalee. The damaged printing press in Kumburumoolai will be rehabilitated.

A cement factory will be established in close proximity to the thermal power station to be constructed in Trincomalee. The ash from the power station will be mixed with imported clinker to produce the cement.

A factory will be established to process the raw ilmenite which is being excavated in Pulmottai and exported. This will result in additional revenue to the country.

20. Fisheries

We will exert pressure on the Central Government to remove the restrictions placed on fishing in the Province, citing security reasons.

As the fishing community had been the worst affected during the past, we will not only provide them all facilities at government expense, but will even provide free housing to poor fishermen families.

We will take steps to take over the fishing harbours from the Central Government and to rehabilitate them. We will also take action to construct new fishing harbours.

We will also invite investments to set up factories to process marine produces such as fish, prawns, crabs for export.

21. Social Forestry

We will provide encouragement to the rural population to develop social forestry.

22. Herbaria

Herbaria will be established in every one of the districts of the Province and encourage the practice of ayurveda.

23. Religion and Culture

My Executive will take action to rehabilitate all religious and cultural institutions affected by the war or tsunami. In addition, my Executive will provide opportunities for all the religions to conduct their activities without discrimination. Nevertheless, my Executive will be secular in conducting its own affairs.

The Eastern province is well known for its country arts. Yet, to date, we have no programmes to foster these arts and culture. Hence, Our Executive will prepare a work programmes in these fields. In particular, training programmes and incentives will be provided. We will also take steps to establish a museum of country arts in the city of Batticaloa.

24. Social Welfare

Children orphaned by the war or tsunami, and elders with none to support them will be included in a special programme of rehabilitation.

25. The Assembly of the Provincial Council

We will take action to construct for the Provincial Council, an assembly hall, offices, library and a meeting place for the public.

Further, in order that members of the Provincial Council could increase their effectiveness, we will conduct workshops and seminars on the duties and responsibilities of the members.

26. Ethnic Harmony

The Eastern Province is a symbol of the unity of Tamils, Muslims, Sinhalese and Burghers. The Muslims of this Province have a history of a thousand years in the Province. During this period, the Tamil-Muslim relationship had been strong and firm. However, as of late,

extremism has caused significant changes in this relationship. We, however, have to reach beyond these conflicts that had bedeviled the Eastern Province over the past 25 years. We have to struggle hard to rid our people of the ethnic biases in their minds.

The first condition that has to be satisfied in all the programmes designed to benefit our people is the need to strengthen "ethnic relationships". This is a great challenge to us.

For this purpose, we propose to establish an Ethnic Harmony Secretariat. This Secretariat will be representative of a truth detection committee, monitoring committee, conciliation committee, science committee and an art and literature committee, representing all levels of the society. This organisation will extend its activities to all the districts of the Province. The committees will consist of intellectuals, society leaders, writers and student representatives who value harmony among the Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese communities rather than political representation. This Secretariat will function directly under the Eastern Province Chief Minister's purview.

CONCLUSION

Respected Hon. Chairman,

We require large amount of funds to implement during the next 18 months, the proposals contained in my Statement of Policy. We will endeavour to meet our financial requirements through local investments and grants from the Central Government. I am confident that friendly countries that have concern for the welfare of the people of the East will come forward to help us. I therefore, wish to make an appeal to the international community on behalf of the affected people of East for such assistance.

May I thank you and other honourable members for having given a patient hearing to the Statement of Policy of the Executive headed by me.