

PRESS STATEMENT OF SELVI J JAYALALITHAA,
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU
6.12.2011

It has come to my notice that Ayyappa devotees from Tamil Nadu on pilgrimage to Sabarimala have been attacked by their brothers in Kerala. Vehicles bearing Tamil Nadu registration plates are being vandalized. Similarly, Tamil establishments in Kerala and even journalists and professionals from Tamil Nadu who are there on official work are under threat. The reason for this animosity appears to be the dispute between the Governments of Kerala and Tamil Nadu over the Mullai Periyar Dam issue.

I call upon the highly educated and intelligent people of God's own Country not to fall a prey to the machinations of narrow, vested interests or of unscrupulous anti-social elements and allow their rational minds to be manipulated to indulge in Quixotic acts of wanton mob violence. To me, these violent developments are alarming and based on imaginary, unfounded fears, which have been fuelled by irresponsible positioning by vested political interests.

When a volatile situation has been precipitated, it is but natural that public passions run high. When things are so, it is the responsibility of the protagonists to reach out to the people and place matters in the right perspective. Let me clarify.

There is no justification whatsoever to believe that the Mullai Periyar dam is unsafe or likely to collapse, bringing a deluge upon Idukki and surrounding districts. The dam is well maintained and has been periodically reinforced. Its safety is being constantly monitored and highly qualified and accomplished technical experts, including those nominated by the Supreme Court of India, have repeatedly reiterated that it is absolutely safe. To doubt its safety merely because it is 116 years old is sheer ignorance. Kallanai, or the Grand Anaicut Dam, widely considered to be the oldest dam in the world, built by Karikala Cholan over the River Cauvery, still stands in Tamil Nadu. Built in the second century AD, it is all of 1900 years old and absolutely safe. Kallanai was built with the same surkhi mortar as the Mullai Periyar dam. There is therefore no necessity to dismiss the Mullai Periyar dam as a primitive construction or

fear that it would self-destruct due to old age. It was based on the confidence in its longevity that the initial water-sharing agreement entered into between the British Government of the State of Madras and the State of Travancore was for a period of 999 years.

There has been widespread panic in recent times in the wake of a rumour that the dam stands on an earthquake-prone zone. A study of the seismic map of India, which can be easily downloaded by anyone from the internet, clearly shows that the whole of Kerala and most parts of India, including the city of Chennai, come under Seismic Zone III, which stands for "moderately active". Tremors, if at all, in Zone III will rarely cross 3 points on the Richter scale. Tremors of 2 to 2.9 intensity on the Richter scale are "generally not felt, but recorded". Such tremors are taking place every minute all over the world and are mere statistics for the Meteorology Department. Tremors of 3 to 3.9 intensity on the Richter scale are "often felt, but rarely cause damage". Such tremors are also widespread and no cause for concern. When this is so, there is absolutely no basis for fear that an earthquake will cause the collapse of the existing Mullai Periyar Dam.

These facts are known to all concerned in Kerala as well. Yet, for some vested reasons, they have preferred to allow a fear psychosis bordering on mass hysteria to build up all over the State over the alleged lack of safety of the Mullai Periyar dam. Kerala is Tamil Nadu's closest neighbour. In fact, till the early 1950s, the two States were one. Malayalees and Tamils share a common linguistic and cultural heritage. There are a large number of Tamils in Kerala. There are an even larger number of Malayalees in Tamil Nadu. And all have lived together all these decades in an admirable display of brotherhood and co-operation. The Government of Tamil Nadu and the people of the State would be the last people on earth who would want devastation to visit their brothers and sisters in Kerala. We would not claim that the Mullai Periyar Dam is safe unless we were absolutely sure of our facts.

I also call upon the media to exercise restraint and report the issue responsibly and objectively.

I also make a fervent appeal to the people of Kerala not to succumb to the machinations of ill-wishers and unscrupulous mischief mongers. Please do not indulge in acts of senseless violence and vandalism over an imaginary non-issue. Please do not destroy the mutual trust, esteem and goodwill that exist between the people of the two States – which have been painstakingly built up, not just over the last six decades, but over centuries. Do not let whipped up passions cloud your reason and better judgement. This is my request to a people whom I have always held in the highest esteem for their intelligence, education, rationality and hard work. Finally, I also call upon the political class of Tamil Nadu to desist from making inflammatory speeches on the issue, which would vitiate the cordial relations that exist between the people of the two States.

J JAYALALITHAA

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

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