

Two Months Before State Polls, PM Talks Of Tamil Pride & Quotes Seminal Texts, Says Chennai City Of Knowledge, Creativity

# MODI PLAYS TO THE CHENNAI GALLERY



## 3 big-ticket projects opened in Chennai

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Three major infrastructure projects in Chennai and its suburbs were opened for public use on Saturday.

This included one arm of the Keelkattalai flyover; a portion of pedestrian skywalk-cum-foot over-bridge in Tambaram and Pinjivakkam bridge in Tiruvallur.

The first project, located on Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Radial Road, being built at Rs 29.5 crore, would reduce travel time from Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR) to Tambaram by 10 minutes.

The three-lane flyover, which is 700m wide, is expected to reduce traffic congestion at Echangadu. However, with construction of the other arm of the flyover continuing, flow of traffic below the flyover remains very slow. Gravel laid for construction work kicks up dust blinding motorists.

The bridge in Tambaram connects the railway station and the bus terminus on the other side of GST Road. The Rs 9.6 crore structure has two sets of elevators, ramps, security cameras and public address systems for officials to make announcements on bus and train timings. Built at Rs.10.3 crore, Pinjivakkam bridge has been constructed across the Cooum near Kandigai to reduce congestion caused by trucks and buses.

Besides these, seven other projects in Trichy, Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Madurai, Theni, Cuddalore and Nilgiris were inaugurated by chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami. The state highways department had recently approved construction of a road over-bridge in Chengalpet district near Melmaruvathur to avoid road accidents. The bridge will be built and the existing railway level crossing in between Acharapakkam and Pakkam villages will be closed on Cheyyur-Polur Road.

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with chief minister Edappadi Palaniswami at a function where the former inaugurated key infrastructure projects, including the metro phase-1 extension (above, right)

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With just two months to go for the Tamil Nadu assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Chennai on Sunday to connect with voters by stirring Tamil pride and sentiments. He praised Chennai for its energy and enthusiasm, knowledge and creativity and profusely thanked its people for giving him a warm welcome.

During his three-hour long visit, Modi sought to strike a chord by recalling Tamil Nadu's "glorious past". In his 20-minute address, the PM emphasised his government's commitment and that of the AIADMK government to the welfare of the people. He then unveiled key infrastructure projects, including the phase I extension Chennai metro rail.

In a rare gesture, the event began with Modi paying floral tributes to huge portraits of AIADMK's iconic leaders, former chief ministers M G Ramachandran and J Jayalalitha, placed on the podium. Modi then began his address in Tamil, saying, "Vanakkam Chennai and Vanakkam Tamil Nadu", evoking loud applause from the audience in the packed indoor Jawaharlal Nehru stadium.

"I am happy to be in Chennai today. I thank the people of this city for the warm welcome they have given me. This city is full of energy and enthusiasm. It is a city of knowledge and creativity. These projects are symbols of innovation and indigenous development. These projects will further the growth of Tamil Nadu," Modi said.

He made the announcements amidst chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Modi ji vazhga'. The stadium erupted in cheers when Modi flagged off the fourth line between Chennai Beach-Attipattu and electrification of a single line Villupuram

Cuddalore-Mayiladuthurai-Thanjavur and Mayiladuthurai-Tiruvarur section that would save Rs 14.61 lakh per day on fuel cost. "Improved connectivity brings convenience. It also helps commerce. The electrification will be a great boon to the delta districts," the PM said.

Laying the foundation stone to modernise 636km long Grand Anicut canal system, he invoked Tamil saint poet Avvaiyar's poem, "Varappura neer uyaram." Reciting in Tamil, Modi stressed the need to conserve every drop of water for future generations. Translating the Tamil verse himself, he said, "When water levels rise, cultivation rises, people prosper, and the state prospers. We have to do whatever we can to conserve water. This is not a national issue. It is a global subject."

While Tamil Nadu is already a leading automobile manufacturing hub of India, Modi said the state was evolving as the tank manufacturing hub of India too. "A tank made in Tamil Nadu will be used in our northern borders to

keep the nation safe. This showcases India's united spirit - Bharat's Ekta Darshan," he said, pointing to Arjun Main Battle Tank (MK-1A), the indigenously made vehicle. Earlier, Arjun (MK-1A) gave a gun salute to Modi in the stadium complex, just ahead of PM proudly handing over the vehicle to the Army.

Modi said India had undertaken a massive effort to become self-reliant in the defence sector inspired by celebrated national poet, Subramania Bharathi's vision. Quoting the poet's famous verse "in the oldest language in the world, Tamil" -- Aayudham Seivom, Nalla Kakitham Seivom, the PM went on to translate it as, "Let us make weapons; let us make paper, let us make factories; let us make schools. Let us make vehicles that can move and fly. Let us make ships that can shake the world."

"I spend ₹35 one way from Tiruvottiyur to Broadway every day on share autos to buy flowers. Metrorail is way more comfortable for me and I don't think I am going to spend more than what I do now

— Yasodha | FLOWER VENDOR, THIRUVOTTIYUR



"It takes about 45 minutes from Tiruvottiyur to Washermenpet by road. By metro, it takes less than 15 minutes. If they reduce ticket prices, I would use this service every day to work

— V Amudha | TEACHER, WASHERMENPET



JAM-PACKED: People take a ride on a metro train on the phase-1 extension

### FARE

Wimco Nagar to Central Metro	₹50
Wimco Nagar to Egmore Station	₹50
Wimco Nagar to CMBT	₹70
Wimco Nagar to Airport	₹70
Wimco Nagar to Alandur	₹70



## Metro travels long distance, has miles to go

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When the first train whooshed past north Chennai localities on Sunday morning giving passengers a bird's eye view of colourful single storey houses against the backdrop of the calm blue sea, a group of elderly men clad in white dhoti gave a standing ovation at Washermenpet metro station. They were not party workers cheering for their political leader but retired doctors and engineers from north Chennai expressing their gratitude for the family members of Dr S Jayachandran of Old Washermenpet, popularly known as 'Erandu Rubai Doctor' (two rupee doctor) who successfully spearheaded a campaign in 2008 to build a metro rail line in

North Chennai.

"We held many protests including and met three different railway ministers over the years requesting for metro rail connectivity. All our struggles have paid off," said Dr C Veni, retired medical superintendent of

### AMID THE FESTIVE MOOD, MANY TOOK JOYRIDES ON THE METRO TRAINS

MMC, and wife of Dr Jayachandran, who led the protest through North Chennai People's Rights Federation.

"I wish my husband was alive to see this day."

People, who travel by MTC buses on the congested Tiruvottiyur High Road for 45 minutes

from Tiruvottiyur to Washermenpet, now have a choice of travelling the same distance in metro trains in less than 15 minutes.

Soon after the grand opening launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the mood turned festive at all the stations as residents queued up to take a free joyride. Many residents from other parts of the city boarded the trains to enjoy the elevated view of the otherwise congested part of the city.

A group of young boys were awed at the automatic fare collection gates, which they had only seen in the movies, while the elderly stood by the escalators wondering how to use it. A woman, who was at Washermenpet metro station to take home the balloons put up, began in-

structing passengers on how to step on an escalator.

"You should not place your feet on the yellow line. That's where it folds and becomes a step," she was heard explaining.

For CMRL officials, however, the job is not over. Not all entry/exit points of stations like Toll Gate were ready and the elevated station at Thiruvottiyur Theradi was still under construction. "We will get them ready as early as possible," an official said.

During the inauguration of the line, PM Modi said the scheme was completed on schedule despite the global pandemic. "This is in line with the boost to Aatmanirbhar Bharat... The focus on urban transport will boost ease of living for citizens here," he said.