

# Banwarilal Purohit says Tamil Nadu, not Maharashtra, is on top

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CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has been seeing perennial prosperity thanks to remittances by non-resident Indians (NRIs) of Tamil origins, and achievements of Tamils living in foreign countries is unparalleled, said governor Banwarilal Purohit here on Wednesday.

Addressing a big group of NRI donors supporting the efforts of Tamil Nadu Foundation (TNF), Purohit said Tamils were among early settlers in different parts of the world, including Singapore and Malaysia, and added that they were doing very well in various disciplines. "They command tremendous respect because of their quality and sincerity," the governor said.

TNF has correctly focused on development of students from government schools in rural areas, the governor said. It will directly benefit farmers'

children and those hailing from poor families.

The occasion was TNF's annual conference where its new initiative -- 'Mann Vaasanai' -- was launched by him. The project aims at generating \$8 million as corpus and deposit Rs 175 lakh each for all 33 districts in Tamil Nadu, besides Puducherry. Interest accruing from the deposits would be used for helping identified slow learners in select government schools.

TNF is incorporated in the US and its activities are regulated by the US laws and regulations. Under Mann Vaasanai, NRI Tamils in the US will be able to choose to contribute to the development of schools and students in their home towns and districts.

"Hats off to TNF," said Purohit, referring to the fact that TNF was the only service organisation allowed by the Tamil Nadu government to work directly in coordination with government schools.

Talking about his own 'familiarisation trips' to different parts of the state, the governor said he had visited all but two districts in Tamil Nadu and now changed his initial impression that his home state Maharashtra was better developed state. "Tamil Nadu is on top, not Maharashtra," said Purohit.

This being election time, many political parties are bound to approach NRIs for contributions, he said, adding that instead of donating for political parties which would result in money being distributed to voters, the NRIs should resolve to divert the funds towards social causes. "You divert the funds for noble causes, not for politics," Purohit said.

Earlier, former IAS officer and TNF's state chapter chairman S Rajarethinam explained how more than 4,500 students studying in 51 government schools in eight revenue districts were benefiting every year from various skill development programmes and academic bridge courses of TNF.

Industrialist and philanthropist Palani G Periasamy recalled how in November 1974 TNF was born at his home in Baltimore and in 1975 got incorporated under the provisions of the US Internal Revenue Code, on the lines of Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation.

"In America, charity is an integral part of life. At least 5-10% of everyone's income is spent on charity," he said, adding that for TNF's development highly skilled people were doing voluntary work.

TNF president Somalai Somasundaram said its membership crossed the 1,000-mark and it had more than 9,000 donors to

support the foundation's initiatives in Tamil Nadu. Mann Vaasanai will connect the US Tamils to their roots and help them support programmes in their home towns and districts.

N Murali, chairman, Karthuri&Sons, said volunteerism and philanthropy were much needed at present, as vast sections of our people were economically and academically backward. "Governance, transparency and probity that TNF is known for should be role model for other NGOs in the country. Such models should be replicated in other states," Murali said.

C Nagappan, finance consultant, proposed vote of thanks.