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W.P.No.27356 of 2019

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 06.02.2026

CORAM :

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE N. SATHISH KUMAR

AND

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE D.BHARATHA CHAKRAVARTHY

W.P.No.27356 of 2019,
W.M.P.No.31591 of 2023, W.M.P.No.36994 of 2024,
W.M.P.No.35572 of 2024,
W.M.P.Nos.23020 & 23022 of 2025,

W.P.No.27356 of 2019

Mr. S.Muralidharan
S/o.Mr.P.Sivalingam, 2A, 3rd Main Road,
Kottur Gardens, Chennai-600 085

Petitioner(s)

Vs

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and
Chief Wildlife Warden, Department of Forests,
Govt. of Tamil Nadu,
No.1 Jeenis Road, Panagal Buildings,
Saidapet, Chennai-600 015 and 76 Others

Respondent(s)

WMP NO. 31591 of 2023

Mr. S.Muralidharan
S/o.Mr.P.Sivalingam, 2a, 3rd Main Road, Kottur Gardens, Chennai-600 085
Currently Residing At F1, 1st Floor, No.40 R.S.Sridhar Street, Kottur,
Kotturpuram, Chennai 600085.

Petitioner(s)

Vs



W.P.No.27356 of 2019

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and
Chief Wildlife Warden, Department Of Forests, Govt. Of Tamil Nadu, No.1 Jeenis
Road, Panagal Buildings, Saidapet, Chennai-600 015 and 7 Others

Respondent(s)

WMP NO. 36994 of 2024

S.Muralidharan
S/o.Mr.P.Sivalingam, 2A, 3rd Main Road, Kottur
Gardens, Chennai-600 085.

Petitioner(s)

Vs

Principal Chief Conservator Of Forests And
Chief Wildlife Warden, Department Of Forests, Govt.
Of Tamil Nadu, No.1 Jeenis Road, Panagal Buildings,
Saidapet, Chennai-600 015 and 64 Others

Respondent(s)

WMP NO. 35572 of 2024

Mr. S.Muralidharan
S/o Mr.P.Sivalingam, 2A, 3rd Main Road, Kottur
Gardens, Chennai 600085

Petitioner(s)

Vs

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and
Chief Wildlife Warden, Department of Forests, Govt. of
Tamil Nadu, No.1 Jeenis Road, Panagal Buildings,
Saidapet, Chennai-600 015 and 65 Others

Respondent(s)

WMP NO. 23020 of 2025

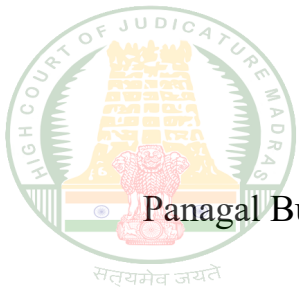
Mr. S.Muralidharan
S/o.Mr.P.Sivalingam, 2A, 3rd Main Road, Kottur Gardens, Chennai-600 085

Petitioner(s)

Vs

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and
Chief Wildlife Warden, Department of Forests,
Govt. of Tamil Nadu, No.1 Jeenis Road,

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Panagal Buildings, Saidapet, Chennai-600 015 and 65 Others

Respondent(s)

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WMP NO. 23022 of 2025

Mr. S.Muralidharan

S/o.Mr.P.Sivalingam, 2A, 3rd Main Road, Kottur Gardens, Chennai-600 085

Petitioner(s)

Vs

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and

Chief Wildlife Warden, Department of Forests, Govt. of Tamil Nadu,

No.1 Jeenis Road, Panagal Buildings, Saidapet,

Chennai-600 015 and 65 Others

Respondent(s)

W.P.No.27356 of 2019 :

For Petitioner(s): Mr.Muralidharan (P-IN-P)

For Respondent(s): Dr.T.Seenivasan, Special Government Pleader (Forest), for R1, 3 to 5

Mr.B.N.Suchindran, Standing Counsel for R4

Mr.V.Chandrasekaran, Senior Panel Counsel, for R6

Mr.S.P.Chockalingam, for R7

Mr.L. Jaivenkatesh, Standing Counsel for R8

Mr. Richardson Wilson, for R 9 to 11, 16 to 45

RR - 12 to 15 - No Appearance

Mr.N.Muralikumaran, Senior Counsel,

for M/s.MCGAN Law Firm, for R 46 to 49

Mr.L.Palanimuthu, for RR - 50 to 64

Mr.M.Purushothaman, for R 65 and 66

Mr.K.M.D.Muhilan

Additional Public Prosecutor for the Special Investigation Team (SIT)

Amici Curiae

1. Mr.C.Mohan, Advocate

2. Mr.T.Mohan, Senior Advocate

3. Mr.M.Santhanaraman, Advocate

4. Mr.Rahul Balaji, Advocate



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ORDER

Removal of Prosopis Juliflora in Thadagam Valley :

With reference to the restoration of the Thadagam area, pursuant to the TERRI report, today, a status report is filed. After giving the details, it is stated that the levelling of the earth mined areas will be done after identifying the material to be backfilled, sourcing of funds, and a period of 2-3 months is required for completion of the works. In this regard, the State Government shall file a detailed status report mentioning the estimate, the funds required whether is sourced or not, and also the details of the funds available in the District Mineral Fund in which the licensed quarry owners deposit the money, and secondly, the fund which is maintained pursuant to the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *Common Cause v. Union of India and others* reported in (2017) 9 SCC 499, thereby imposing penalty on the violators and thirdly, the fund that are generated by imposing fine on the illegal miners, the total amount available for the Coimbatore District, shall be placed on record and the need for the present project shall also be placed on record. In the meanwhile, it will be also open for the District Collector to allot funds for this project from the available funds also.

2.Call this matter for filing a detailed status report specifically as to what further works were conducted, including the financial details, etc., on 27.02.2026.



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Trek Tamil Nadu Initiative :

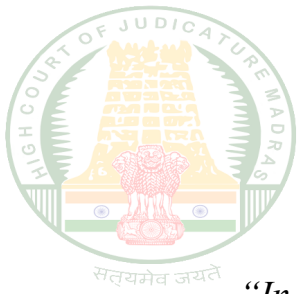
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3. With reference to the trekking routes, the learned Government Advocate would produce the order of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests dated 10.10.2025, in which, it is stated that, with reference to the Karikayur to Porivarai Rock Painting route, the trekking is suspended and further study is undertaken and only depending upon the further study, a decision will be taken. With reference to Karikayur to Rengasamy Peak, it is stated that a decision is taken to continue regulated trekking limited to approved timings and group sizes with necessary awareness and safety briefings, cleanliness, noise control and adherence to forest regulations and regular monitoring. With reference to Baraliyar Trek route, it is stated that the trekking activities shall remain suspended until further orders. The same is taken on record. Let the further study in respect of the first route be undertaken and the decision taken in respect thereof be placed before this Court.

4. Call on 17.04.2026.

Steel Wire Rope Fencing (Buffer Zone) :

5. With regard to the buffer zone, today, the State Government has filed a report, in which, it is stated as follows :



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“In this regard it is submitted that the Forest Department is presently in the process of preparing Eco-Sensitive Zone notification proposals and development of Zonal master plans in respect of areas surrounding Sanctuaries, National Parks, and other Protected areas, with a view to addressing buffer related issues. This will cover most of the wildlife rich habitats and forests and address the issue of regulation of activities. It is further submitted that with reference to remaining areas where such ESZ protection is not available and is required considering the sensitivity of wildlife habitats, a detailed examination is required to assess the existing regulations of various departments and to verify the applicable legal framework. Accordingly, it is humbly prayed that a period of six weeks may be granted to the department to submit proposal to the Government to develop and finalize the framework and take the matter forward.”

6.Learned Senior Panel Counsel appearing for the Central Government also seeks some time to implement the orders of this Court. Our earlier order dated 12.12.2025 clearly indicates to notify the Eco-Sensitive Area to be declared as per the recommendations of Dr.K.Kasthurirangan Commission, taking note of the fact that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has issued notification in S.O.3072(E), dated 06.07.2022, notifying the village mentioned therein as a Eco-Sensitive Area. Therefore, we require the Central Government to notify the entire buffer area, as described in our earlier order, as Eco-Sensitive



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Area as done in S.O.3072(E), dated 06.07.2022. In this regard, the State

Government has to send a proposal to the Central Government after identifying the entire buffer zone to be declared as Eco-Sensitive Area, for which, the learned Government Advocate would seek further time.

7.Call on 13.03.2026 for filing further report in this regard.

Steel Wire Rope Fencing :

8.The party-in-person brought to the notice of this Court that the steel wire fencing erected is not upto the standard and in some places, the same has got damaged due to the attack of the wild animals. The learned Government Advocate seeks time to file a report in this regard.

9.Call on 27.02.2026.

Illegal Resorts at Anaikatti Area/Elephant Protection :

10.At the request of the learned Government Advocate, call on 27.02.2026 finally for filing inspection report.



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Banning of Night Traffic on SH-164 :

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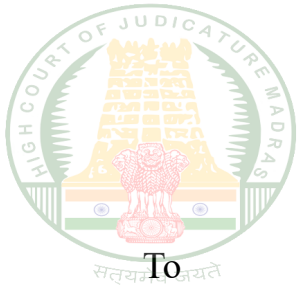
11.Today, on behalf of the Highways Department, the speed calming measures works that were done are placed on record. The learned *Amici Curiae* have inspected the road and have filed a memo containing the suggestions, which include speed limit of 30 km; road rails on both sides of the road should be opened to the critical areas as identified by the Forest Department; installation of further speed breakers – road ramblers for every 300 metres; and long term measures such as identifying areas for construction of underpasses, overpasses, etc.

12.Let the learned Government Advocate get instructions with reference to the suggestions made and also place on record the steps that are taken. Wherever the Forest Department identifies or requires that the guard rails have to be removed, the same can also be removed in the meanwhile.

13.Call on 27.02.2026.

[N.S.K.J.] [D.B.C.J.,]
06.02.2026

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To

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- 1.The Principal Secretary,
Department of Forests And Environment,
St. George Fort, Chennai 600 009.
- 2.The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
(Head of Forest Force),
Forest Head Quarters,
Guindy-Velachery Main Road,
Velachery, Chennai – 600 032.
- 3.The District Collector,
The Nilgiris, Ooty,
The Nilgiris District.
- 4.The District Collector,
Coimbatore.
- 5.The District Forest Officer,
Kodaikanal, Dindigul District.
- 6.The Assistant Director of Rural Development,
Coimbatore.
- 7.The Commissioner,
Department of Geology and Mining,
Thiru.Vi.Ka.Industrial Estate, Alandur Road, Guindy, Chennai-600 002
- 8.Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change,
Indira Paryavaran Bhavan, Jorbagh Road, New Delhi-110 003
- 9.The Superintending Engineer (Coimbatore North),
Tamilnadu Generation and Distribution Limited (TANGEDCO),
Tatabad, Coimbatore.
- 10.The Principal Secretary/Chairman,
Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board,
No.76, Mount Salai, Guindy, Chennai- 600 032



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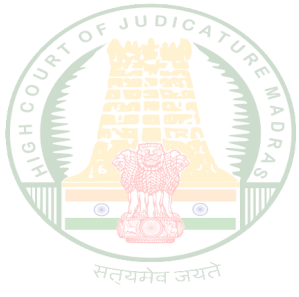
11.The Managing Director
Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation
Wallajah Road, Chennai – 600 002.

12.The Director,
Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department,
No.119, Uthamar Gandhi Salai,
Nungambakkam High Road,
Chennai – 600 034.

13.The Special Government Pleader (Forests),
Madras High Court, High Court Campus,
Chennai 600 104.

14.The Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,
Anaikatty (Post),
Coimbatore – 641 108.

15.The Commissioner,
Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation,
Coimbatore.



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