



W.P.No.27356 of 2019

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 31.07.2026

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CORAM :

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE N. SATHISH KUMAR

AND

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE D. BHARATHA CHAKRAVARTHY

W.P.No.27356 of 2019

and

W.M.P.No.37000 of 2024

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 77 Others

Respondent(s)

W.M.P.No.37000 of 2024

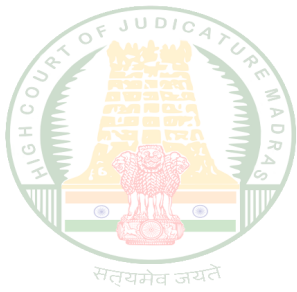
S.Muralidharan

... 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)



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

For Respondent(s): Mr.P.V.Balasubramaniam,
Additional Advocate General,
assisted by Mr.K.Surendar,
Special Government Pleader and
Mr.G.Abraham Prabhu, Additional Government Pleader
for RR1, 3 & 5

R2 – Deleted vide Court order dated 09.01.2021 in
W.M.P.No.4685 of 2021 in W.P.No.27356 of 2019

Mr.B.N.Suchindran,
Standing Counsel for R4 (TNPCB)

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 RR9 to 11, 16 to 45

RR 12 to 15 - No Appearance

Mr.N.Muralikumaran,
Senior Counsel for M/s.MCGAN Law Firm
for RR 46 to 49

Mr.L.Palanimuthu for RR 50 to 64

Mr.M.Purushothaman for RR 65 & 66

Mr.Ramasamy Meiyappan for R67

R68 – Returned unserved (Insufficient Address)

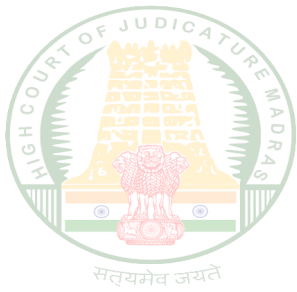
Mr.V.Jayaprakash Narayanan for RR 69 to 73

Mr.K.S.Punithan,
Standing Counsel for R74 (TTDC)

Mr.N.R.R.Arun Natarajan,
Standing Counsel for R75 (HR & CE)

Mr.Harishankar for Mr.G.Gokul for R76 & R77

Mr.D.Ferdinard for R78 (Coimbatore Corporation)



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Amici Curiae

1. Mr.C.Mohan, Advocate
2. Mr.T.Mohan, Senior Advocate
3. Mr.M.Santhanaraman, Advocate
4. Mr.Rahul Balaji, Advocate

ORDER

Notification of Elephant Corridors :

With reference to the notification of elephant corridors, the learned Additional Advocate General has filed a status report. It is stated that, with reference to the notification of three corridors, the matter is at the final consideration of the Government. It is stated that due orders are expected within a short time. Let the final orders be passed by the Government.

2. With reference to “Thally-Bilikkal-Jawalagiri” Corridor, the status report states that eviction is to be carried out first before the notification is finalised. We are of the opinion that, carrying out of eviction is not a *sine qua non* for notification and as a matter of fact, issuing the notification first will even enable faster and swifter removal of the encroachment. Therefore, the notification need not await the eviction process which can be carried out simultaneously. The report further states that in respect of 12 corridors, the report with reference to 4 corridors is ready except for few clarifications from the District Forest Officer which shall



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be submitted soon. The same shall be expedited.

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3. With reference to another three corridors, it is submitted that the report of the Committee will be submitted by 31.07.2026 and with reference to another 5 corridors, the Committee report is under preparation and it is submitted that the report will be submitted within 15 days. With reference to the 12 corridors, the Committee has observed that the elephant movement is very rare and there is no bottleneck and the report is under preparation.

4. Let the works, as promised, progress and it must be seen that till date, though the writ petition is continuously being monitored and repeated orders being passed right from the year 2019, the notifications have not seen the light of the day. Therefore, the process be expedited and notifications be issued.

5. With reference to the dropping of certain corridors, the learned *Amici Curiae* have filed a memo, in which, in Sub-Heading 4, they have dealt with about the four corridors and detailed reasons as to how the dropping of those corridors is incorrect by considering the parameters, and approach to be adopted as per the National Report, 2023, have been given by them. The remarks suggest that dropping has to be revisited. A copy of the memo is served on the learned Additional Advocate General. The learned *Amici Curiae* would also produce the

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excerpts from the Elephant Corridors of India, 2023, in support of their submissions. Let the same be considered and let due response with reference to the four corridors be placed before this Court. The relevant data which the Committee considered shall also be placed before this Court. The memo filed by the learned *Amici Curiae* also contains excerpts relating to the parameters and approach as adopted in the National Report, 2023, statutory and legal conditions that have to be imposed at the time of notification or thereafter, the land use and development-control conditions, infrastructure and mitigation conditions, administrative and monitoring conditions. The well researched contents of the memo filed by the learned *Amici Curiae* are extracted hereunder for ready reference.

“A. Parameters and approach adopted in the 2023 National Report

(i) Definition of a corridor: "...a strip of land that facilitates the movement of elephants between two or more viable habitat patches. Movement of elephants away from forest habitats into the human domain without connecting to viable habitat patches may not be considered elephant corridors." (Synopsis, para 2, p. iii)

(ii) Ground-validation methodology: corridors were ground-validated jointly by teams nominated by Project Elephant and officials of the respective State Forest Department, using a structured questionnaire; the duly filled-in datasheets were furnished by the State Forest Departments themselves. For Tamil



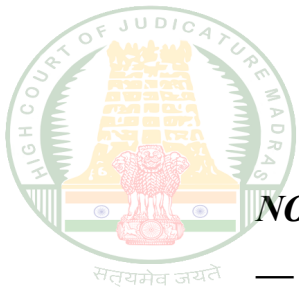
Nadu, the underlying field data was accordingly certified by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department.

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(iii) Fifteen recorded parameters for every corridor: Connectivity; State; Indicative length and width; Geo-coordinates; Forest ranges within the corridor; Revenue villages within the corridor; Ecological importance; Habitat type; Major land use; Elephant movement status (Regular/Seasonal/Occasional); Number of elephants using the corridor; Major bottleneck(s); Linear infrastructure in the corridor; Recommendations by the Forest Department to improve the corridor; and Current status of the corridor (graded "Active" or "Impaired", with intensity of use noted as increasing, stable or decreasing where active).

(iv) Impaired corridors are retained, not deleted: the Synopsis records that 15 corridors (10%) nationally have been graded "impaired" — i.e., where elephant use is "perceived to be virtually nonexistent" — yet every one of them continues to be carried on the National List, with restoration recommended, rather than being struck off for want of current use (Synopsis, paras 2 and 4, pp. iii-iv).

(v) Interstate and transnational corridors are retained, not excluded: the National Report records 19 interstate corridors and 6 transnational (India-Nepal) corridors, including five corridors originating in Tamil Nadu that extend into Karnataka or Kerala (Annexure-I, Sl. Nos. 127, 132, 148, 149 and 150). None of these is excluded from the List on the ground that a portion lies outside Tamil Nadu; instead, the Department's own recommendation for such corridors is inter-State or trans-boundary cooperation.



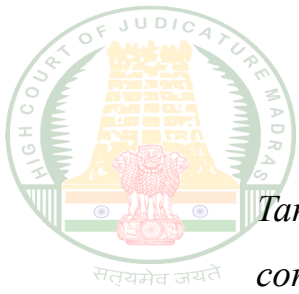
NOTIFICATION ALONE WILL NOT SECURE PROTECTION
— CONDITIONS REQUIRED TO BE IMPOSED

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6. It is respectfully submitted that mere notification of an area as an "elephant corridor" is essentially declaratory in character. It earmarks the area on a map but does not by itself impose any legally enforceable restriction on land use, construction, fencing, felling or other activity within the corridor, unless the notification is coupled with a distinct legal instrument that regulates the land. It is stated that the Sigur Plateau corridor (Sl. Nos. 11-14 of the Status Report, "Notified vide G.O. No.125, dated 31-08-2010" stands, in its entirety, additionally brought under the Tamil Nadu Preservation of Private Forests Act, 1949 ("the TNPPF Act"), which regulates felling, clearing and change of land use on private forest land, and to that extent enjoys enforceable legal protection. The remaining corridors dealt with in the Status Report including the 24 corridors on which "extensive work" is stated to be concluded and which may shortly be placed for notification — are not, on the material before this Hon'ble Court, similarly governed by the TNPPF Act or any comparable legal regime. It is respectfully suggested that, corridor-by-corridor and depending on the land tenure involved, the following conditions — statutory as well as administrative — may be considered for being imposed at the time of notification, in addition to, and independent of, notification under the TNPPF Act wherever the latter is separately attracted:

a) Statutory/legal conditions

- (i) Notification of the areas identified corridors under the



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Tamil Nadu Preservation of Private Forests Act, 1949 wherever the corridor traverses private forest land, on the model of the Segur Plateau corridor and the Kallar Corridor

(ii) *Declaration of corridor segments abutting a Protected Area/Tiger Reserve as an Eco-Sensitive Zone under Section 3(2)(v) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, restricting mining, new industry and construction — a "general regulatory framework on similar lines to Eco Sensitive Zone";*

(iii) *Declaration of corridor segments connecting two existing Protected Areas as a Conservation Reserve or Community Reserve under Sections 36A/36C of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, so as to confer statutory protection while continuing to permit regulated agricultural use by existing right-holders;*

(iv) *Inclusion of the corridor boundary in the Working Plan of the concerned Forest Division and in the Management Plan of the adjoining Protected Area/Tiger Reserve, as recommended in the 2023 National Report.*

(v) *Zoning of the corridor as a restricted/no-development zone in the Master Plan or Detailed Development Plan under the Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act, 1971, so that building and layout approvals within the corridor are denied or compulsorily referred to the Forest Department;*

(vi) *Endorsement of the corridor boundary on the Record of Rights (Chitta/Adangal) maintained by the Revenue Department, so that patta transactions and land-use changes within the corridor trigger automatic reference to the Forest Department;*



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(vii) *An embargo on the grant of fresh mining/quarrying leases by the Department of Geology and Mining and non-renewal of subsisting leases, within a notified corridor;*

(viii) *A requirement that the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board treat corridor-status as a relevant factor while considering an application for Consent to Establish/Operate in respect of any unit located within or adjoining a notified corridor.*

(b) Land-use and development-control conditions

(i) *Prohibition on erection of new electric/solar fences, compound walls or elephant-proof trenches within the corridor, and phased removal of existing ones — as already carried out at the Sachidananda School and Mettupalayam Forest College portions of the Kallar Corridor;*

(iii) *A defined no-construction buffer on either side of the identified elephant path within the corridor, prohibiting new farmhouses, resorts, ashrams and similar structures of the kind identified as bottlenecks in the Sujalkuttai–Peerkadavur–Bannari corridor (Sl. No. 7);*

(iii) *A time-bound phase-out of incompatible land use on Government/institutional lease-hold land falling within a corridor, on the model of the TANTEA Ryan & Lawson tea-division phase-out by 2028 (Sl. No. 23), to be adopted as a standard condition for other estate segments identified within corridors (e.g., Sl. Nos. 21, 22);*

(iv) *Priority, negotiated purchase/acquisition of critical*



private or patta land parcels identified as pinch-points — as already recommended for the Topslip–Navamalai corridor — to be funded through CAMPA or Project Elephant funds, within a defined outer time-limit;

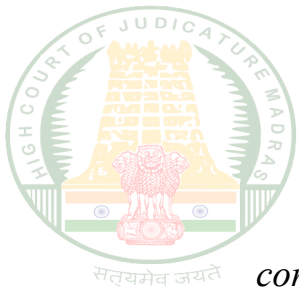
(v) A condition that renewal of Government estate/plantation leases within a corridor be made conditional upon maintaining elephant passage and complying with the corridor management plan.

(c) Infrastructure and mitigation conditions

(i) Prohibition on new linear infrastructure (roads, railway lines, transmission lines, canals) within a corridor without prior wildlife clearance and an approved mitigation plan, and retrofitting of existing high-tension lines with elephant-safe insulation;

(ii) Construction of underpasses/overpasses, or speed-regulation measures (speed breakers, signage, night-time traffic restriction) at each GPS-identified elephant-crossing point — of the kind already identified for the Pannagaram-Hogenakkal-Anchetty (Sl. No. 5), Doddacombai-Bargur Road (Sl. No. 6) and Sujalkuttai-Peerkadavur-Bannari (Sl. No. 7) corridors — to be made a standard, time-bound condition of notification rather than a discretionary recommendation;

(iii) Deployment of AI-camera/thermal-sensor early-warning systems at railway and highway crossings within the corridor, on the model already in use near Madhukkarai (Sl. No. 18);



(iv) Regulation of seasonal/pilgrim traffic through the corridor during peak season, of the kind required at the Kumili-Mel Gudalur-Suranganar corridor during the Shabarimala season (Sl. No. 27).

(d) Administrative and monitoring conditions

(i) Constitution of a corridor-level monitoring committee (Divisional Forest Officer, Revenue Divisional Officer, local body representative and an independent/NGO expert) for each notified corridor, to meet periodically and report to the Chief Wildlife Warden;

(ii) Ground demarcation of the corridor boundary (survey stones/pillars, on the pattern already adopted by the State of Odisha) within a fixed time-frame following notification, consistent with the 2023 National Report's own emphasis that "the first step towards safeguarding an elephant corridor is to identify it on time", followed by delineation of its boundaries "both in a map as well as in the ground";

(iii) Periodic, at least annual, monitoring and public reporting of the "active/impaired" status and intensity of use of each notified corridor, on the pattern of the 2023 National Report, with a mandatory restoration protocol to be triggered if a corridor is found impaired, rather than de-notification;

(iv) A defined human-elephant-conflict mitigation and crop/property compensation mechanism specific to each corridor, including prior Gram Sabha consultation, so as to secure the cooperation of resident right-holders and local communities."



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6.The learned Additional Advocate General would submit that the same would be taken into account and they will come up with their response. Let the response with reference to the suggestions be also contained in the status report to be filed in this regard. We are *prima facie* of the view that the suggestions are well made after detailed consideration of the National Report and the legal position and therefore, may serve very well as a guidance for making of the notification as well and also for framing further guidelines in this regard.

7.Call on 28.08.2026.

Removal of Solar Panels in Ukkadam and Valankulam Lakes :

8.With reference to removal of solar panels in Ukkadam and Valankulam lakes, the learned counsel appearing for the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation seeks some more time to file a status report. We also make it clear that the Corporation officials are free to obtain the report of the study made by the Expert Institute in a sealed cover and produce before us. We make it clear that the report has not reached us so far. For filing status report as well the study report in a sealed cover, call on 14.08.2026.



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Sound and 3-D Light Shows at Waterbodies :

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9. With reference to Ooty and Yercaud lakes and Pykara lake, certain documents are filed by the learned Additional Advocate General. In this regard, we had earlier ordered sampling of water/sampling of sludge, etc., and report to be filed by testing it both by the Laboratory that caters to the local body as well as from the Central Soil Testing Agency. Let reports be collected by the respondent Corporation and be placed before us on the next occasion. After going through the records, the learned Additional Advocate General is also requested to place on record as to how the Pykara lake is vested in the Tamil Nadu Green Energy Corporation Limited.

10. Call on 28.08.2026.

[N.S.K.J.,] [D.B.C.J.,]
31.07.2026

mkn

To

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.

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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

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.

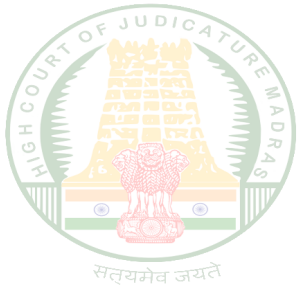


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13. The Special Government Pleader (Forests),
Madras High Court, High Court Campus,
Chennai 600 104.

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

15. The Commissioner,
Tiruppur Municipal Corporation,
Tiruppur.



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