

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI

Original Application No.13 of 2025 (SZ)

In the matter of:

Tribunal on its own motion - SUO MOTU based on the News item in The New Indian Express newspaper, Chennai e-edition dated 16.01.2025, titled, "Experts are alarmed as 350 turtles was ashore dead till January 15".

Versus

Union of India, Represented by its Secretary,
MOEF & CC, New Delhi and ors.

...Respondent(s)

**REPORT FILED BY 6TH RESPONDENT- THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR
OF FOREST AND CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN, CHENNAI.**

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Through
Dr. D. Shanmuganathan
Standing Counsel of Tamil Nadu
National Green Tribunal
Southern Zone, Chennai

DATE: 06.02.2025

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....Respondent(s)

STATUS REPORT FILED BY THE 6th RESPONDENT

I, Rakesh Kumar Dogra, I.F.S., Son of Late M L Dogra, Hindu, aged about 57 years, residing at A-1204, AIS Housing Complex, TAISHA, Nerkundram, Chennai-92, and presently working as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai do hereby solemnly affirm and sincerely state as follows:

1. It is respectfully submitted that I am the 6th respondent herein, and I am acquainted with the facts of the case based on the available records. I am filing this counter on behalf of Tamil Nadu Forest Department..
2. It is respectfully submitted that as directed by Honorable Tribunal, the daily mortality reports of Sea turtles washed ashore from 17.1.2025 to 04.02.2025 is tabulated below:

Date Wise Turtle Mortality Details from 17.1.2025 to 04.02.2025

Date	Divisions								Total
	Chennai	Villupuram	Cuddalore	Nagapattinam	Ramathapuram	Tuticorin	Tirunelveli	Kanniyakumari	
17-Jan-25	21	0	12	1	1	0	0	0	35
18-Jan-25	70	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	77
19-Jan-25	21	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	26
20-Jan-25	20	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	26
21-Jan-25	20	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	29
22-Jan-25	11	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	12
23-Jan-25	33	1	9	2	0	0	0	0	45
24-Jan-25	106	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	109
25-Jan-25	68	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	72
26-Jan-25	34	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
27-Jan-25	64	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	69
28-Jan-25	24	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	25
29-Jan-25	58	0	0	5	1	0	0	1	65
30-Jan-25	44	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	47
31-Jan-25	23	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	31
01-Feb-25	27	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	31
02-Feb-25	20	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
03-Feb-25	4	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	14
04-Feb-25	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Total	671	27	52	35	5	0	0	2	792

3. It is respectfully submitted that in response to the unusual spike in Olive Ridley turtle mortality along the Chennai coastline, several proactive measures have been initiated to address the crisis and mitigate further turtle fatalities:

i State-Level Workshop:

A comprehensive workshop was conducted, involving key stakeholders such as the Indian Coast Guard and the Fisheries Department. The primary objective of this initiative was to foster collaboration among relevant authorities and discuss actionable

solutions to reduce turtle mortality, focusing on sustainable fishing practices and by catch reduction.

ii **Fishermen Sensitization Programs:**

Sensitization programs were organized in the coastal communities of Ennore, Besant Nagar, SooleriKattukuppam and Pudupattinam. Similar programmes have been organized in all the coastal districts. These educational programs aimed to raise awareness among local fishermen about the risks of bycatch and provided guidance on strategies to prevent turtle entanglement in fishing nets.

iii **On-Site and Off - Site Post-Mortem Examinations (PMEs):**

Wildlife Warden, Chennai organized on-site post-mortem examinations of the stranded turtles to assess the cause of death for significant findings. Off-Site post-mortem examinations of dead turtles were carried out by Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (**TANUVAS**) for significant findings. A special capacity building programme has also been organized at state level for Veterinarians from all over the state at AIWC, Chennai on 5th February 2025 to handle the necropsy of sea turtles and marine animals.

iv **Night Patrols:**

Night patrols were organized daily along the coastline to monitor distressed turtles and protect their nesting sites. Emphasis was placed on safeguarding eggs and nesting females from potential human disturbance and natural predators, ensuring a secure environment for turtle reproduction.

v. **Coordination with other departments and District Offices:**

Formal requests have been made to the Fisheries Department and the Indian Coast Guard urging them to implement more proactive measures to address the ongoing crisis and help in Conservation of Species. These included the enforcement of stricter fishing regulations, particularly related to net types and by catch. Continuous and collaborative engagement with these departments remains essential for immediate intervention.

vi **Ex-situ Conservation Programs:**

The establishment of hatcheries along the coastline has played a pivotal role in safeguarding turtle eggs from predators and human interference. These hatcheries provide a controlled environment for eggs to incubate and hatch safely before the young turtles are released into the sea.

vii **Patrolling and Monitoring:**

Regular beach patrols are conducted to monitor nesting sites, ensuring that turtles are not disturbed during the nesting process. This includes surveillance for illegal activities such as poaching and egg collection.

viii **Community Engagement and Awareness:**

Local communities, including fishermen and coastal residents, have been sensitized about the importance of Olive Ridley conservation. Fishermen have been educated on minimizing by catch through the use of turtle-friendly fishing gear and practices.

ix **Collaboration with Government and NGOs:**

Various stakeholders, including the Forest Department, NGOs (such as SSTCN and TREE Foundation), and local authorities, work together to implement and enforce conservation laws, including the prohibition of destructive fishing practices near nesting sites.

4. It is respectfully submitted that in an exemplary action, Joint patrolling team (Forest Department, Fisheries Department, Coast Guard & Sagar mithra Staff) had arrested and remanded offenders on 01.02.2025 for illegal trawl net usage resulting in capture of 16 live Olive Ridley turtles and turtles were safely released into sea. With continued surveillance, more than 170 violating vessels have been challaned for further necessary action.

5. It is respectfully submitted that second Nodal Task Force meeting was convened on 06.02.2025 under the Chairmanship of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai. The various actions taken by the various Departments on the deliberations of previous Nodal Task Force meeting were discussed during the meeting and minutes of the Nodal Task Force meeting held on 06.02.2025 in enclosed in **Annexure**.

6. Enhanced surveillance along Coastal line, Educating fisherman on marine Conservation laws & protection of endangered species, strict legal enforcement to deter illegal fishing practices, utilizing GPS tracking and drone surveillance for better monitoring of illegal fishing activity are

also recommended for Conservation of Sea turtles. With the combined efforts of the departments of Government of Tamil Nadu, the incidences of mortality have come down significantly and on a positive note, the nesting has picked up.

In light of the above facts and circumstances, it is humbly prayed that this Hon'ble Tribunal may pass any direction or order as it may deem fit, in the interests of justice and ecological preservation.

Date: 06. 02.2025

**Signed by Rakesh Kumar
Dogra**

Date: 06-02-2025 21:16:41

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
& Chief Wildlife Warden

VERIFICATION

I, Rakesh Kumar Dogra, I.F.S., Son of Late M L Dogra, Hindu, aged about 57 years, residing at A-1204, AIS Housing Complex, TAISHA, Nerkundram, Chennai-92, and presently working as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai Solemnly affirm that the contents of this Report are true to the best of my knowledge based on the records and I have not suppressed any facts.

Date:06.02.2025

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
& Chief Wildlife Warden

Minutes of Nodal Task Force for Conservation & Protection of Sea Turtles meeting held at 11.00 A.M on 06.02.2025 under the Chairmanship of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai at Mini conference Hall, O/o the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force), Chennai-32.

The following officers and members were present during the meeting.

Sl. No.	Name & Designation	Representing for
1	Mr. Rakesh Kumar Dogra, IFS., Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai-32.	O/o the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force), Chennai-32.
2	Mr. Ashish Kumar Srivastava, IFS., Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Director, Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur.	Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur.
3	Mr. Deepak Bilgi, IFS., Chief Mission Director, Tamil Nadu Coastal Restoration Mission, Chennai	Tamil Nadu Coastal Restoration Mission, Chennai
4	Mr. Manish Meena, IFS. Wildlife Warden, Chennai.	Wildlife Warden, Chennai.
5	Mr. P. V. Vijeya Karthik Raj, Superintendent of Police, Coastal Security Group.	Coastal Security Group
6	Mr. N. Suresh Kumar, Deputy Director, Department of Environment.	Department of Environment
7	Mrs. Sharmila, Joint Director of Fisheries Regional, Chennai.	Commissioner of Fisheries
8	Mr. M. Senthil Kumar, Assistant Director of Fisheries (Marine), Head Office.	Commissioner of Fisheries
9	Mr. M. Aramuathan, U/ADH	Indian Coast Guard.
10	Mr. V. Arun, Co-Ordinator	Student Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN)
11	Mr. K. Shravan Krishnan,	Student Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN)
12	K. Jeevarathnam, Secretary	Chennai Fishermen VisaiPadagu Owners Association.
13	K. Suresh, Treasurer,	Chennai Fishermen VisaiPadagu Owners Association.

The Principal Chief Conservator for Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden,

Chennai welcomed all the participants. He mentioned positive development on the picking up of sea turtles nestings after sustainable action for the past one half months. He also added that nine nests were located and mortality of turtles has been considerably reduced on account of combined action by Tamil Nadu Police Department, Fisheries Department, Forest Department, Coast Security Guard along with NGOs which are surely positive signs leading towards sea turtle conservation.

Sl. No.	Actionable Points	Action followed / to be followed
1	<p>To strictly implement the orders issued in the G.O.(Ms)No.186, Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (FS-4) Department, dated 30.09.2015 as no trawl net shall be used without fixing Turtle Excluder Device (TED) before the Cod end, during November to April.</p> <p>The development of better TEDs with lesser loss of catch is an ongoing process and better models are getting tested, the fact of the ban remains, and its use is mandatory.</p> <p>Fisheries department can provide the prototype of recently evolved devices to the fishermen associations for its adoption.</p> <p>Fisheries Department would initiate strict action against the persons violating the regulation.</p>	<p>The Fisheries Department reported that ongoing process of improving the prototype of TED continues and recently fifty units of improved model have been tested, and ordered by Fisheries department to popularize its usage.</p> <p>It was also reported that recently steel devices for Rs.23600/- were in trial for improvement.</p> <p>It was also added that a Supreme Court case has been filed in 2021 for which hearing and final orders are expected. A copy of the above case has been requested by the PCCF & CWLW for information.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Fisheries Department</p>

2	<p>To enforce the orders issued in the G.O.(Ms)No.146, Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (FS-3) Department, dated 27.09.2016 to prohibit the fishing by mechanized fishing vessels, motorized country crafts and those using mechanized fishing techniques in a radius of 5 (five) nautical miles around potential nesting and breeding sites of sea turtles identified by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and Department of Forest in the coastal areas of Chennai, Kanchipuram, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Nagapattinam, Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi and Kanniyakumari Districts of Tamil Nadu during the turtle breeding season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control room needs to physically monitor for 24 x 7 boat movement in the coastal areas within the 5 nautical miles, by more than the time spend in the prohibited zone. 	<p>It was reported by Fisheries Department that 102 charge sheets were filed against offenders after 24x7 monitoring of boat movements in coastal areas by control room and 56 charge sheets were filed for switching off transponders in boat and offenders will be reported before Adjudating officer within 15 days</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the Helpline Numbers to the public in coastal villages and other departments in the committee, so that information on the violations can be shared. 	<p>Already in existence.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Patrolling may be 	

	done by Fisheries department.	Already in existence.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint patrolling along with CSG and Forest department. The fisheries department was requested to hire boats for this purpose 	Joint patrolling is being organized by Fisheries with forest and other departments by hiring boats by forest department at the rate of Rs.22000/- per boat.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Random patrolling also need to be undertaken during night hours. 	Wildlife Warden was requested to undertake random joint patrolling during night hours since turtle movement is more seen during night hours.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associations were requested that Fisherman may give information on movement of turtle for nesting 	<p>Fishermen Association gave an assurance to the PCCF & CWLW that as requested, information on movement of turtles for nesting will be given to the concerned department.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Fisheries Department</p>
3	<p>Penal action to be taken by Authorized Officers / Adjudicating Officers of Fisheries Department under Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983 for violations of above Government Orders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisheries Department may levy early penalty as decided by Adjudicating officers and fishing license may also be cancelled for violations as reported on exemplary penal action to act as deterrence to violators. 	Action already underway. 15 days mandatory notice time is required to be given.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The action taken on 24 boats 	It was informed that the action

	<p>may please be informed.</p>	<p>will be ordered by Adjudating Officers on 14.02.2025. Action: Fisheries Department</p>
<p>4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate powers to the Coastal Security Group to strengthen implementation of regulation – Order Status requested. 	<p>It was informed that necessary proposals were sent for authorizing officials of Coastal Security Group (Sub-inspector of Police and above) and Marine Enforcement Wing to initiate penal action against the violators of Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act and Rules.</p> <p>It was requested to update the status of delegating powers to Coastal Security Group since the turtle conservation activity shall be strengthened by combined action.</p> <p>Action: Fisheries Department</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Amendment may be issued to Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act and Rules to make switching off of GPS transponders in fishing boats as an offence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensured that the Transponders may be fitted in all fishing boats and fishing boat movements monitored every day. 	<p>Already in existence</p> <p>Action: Fisheries Department</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>All fishing boats in 5 nautical miles may be monitored through GPS technology to analyze their movement and amount of time spent along the coast. Suitable technical platform may be developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensured that the Transponders 	

	<p>may be fitted in all fishing boats and fishing boat movements monitored every day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transponders could also be converted to solar for better working 	<p>It was reported that monitoring is being carried out.</p> <p>It was requested by the Nodal Task Force that necessary proposals may be considered under TANII Scheme and reported.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Fisheries Department</p>
7	<p>Diesel subsidy and other allowances given by Government should not be extended to fishermen who are not fitting TED during the period of November to April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The specific cases may kindly be brought to notice of the task force. 	<p>It was informed that the action will be taken on above with reference to the chargesheeted vessels after according opportunity to explain their position.</p> <p>It was requested that proceeding copies may be shared with Nodal Task Force.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Fisheries Department</p>
8	<p>Task force should arrange for joint inspection including representatives of all departments concerned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional patrolling would be carried for joint inspection including representatives of all departments. 	<p>Wildlife Warden was requested to carry out additional patrolling for joint inspection with other departments.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Fisheries Department / CSG / Coast Guard / WLW, Chennai</p>
9	<p>Task force should share information on hotspots of turtle activity to Coast Guard. Coast Guard will monitor activities of fishing boats in the hotspots and send periodical reports to task force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea turtle nesting hotspot 	<p>Wildlife Warden was requested</p>

	<p>locations in lat.-long to the Fisheries Department, Coastal Security Group to monitor the activities of fishing boats.</p>	<p>to share information on hotspots of turtle activity to Coast Guard for monitoring activity of fishing boat in the hotspots. Action: Wildlife Warden, Chennai</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Capacity building of departments of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, Forests and Research institutions like AIWC and TANUVAS should be done to equip them to deal with turtle mortality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One training program was conducted by AIWC, on 05.02.2025. 	<p>A specialized capacity buildig programme was organized for Veterinarians on 05.02.2025 at AIWC, Vandalur with help of TANUVAS for necropsy of turtles and other marine animals. Around 20 Veterinarians participated in the conference with good response. Any other capacity building programme may be suggested by Fisheries Department will be organized.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Forest Department should ensure daily night patrol in turtle nesting areas and whenever increase in mortality is observed, it should be immediately reported.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily early morning and night patrol in the turtle nesting areas and report and inform the action taken. 	<p>Wildlife Warden was requested to give an action taken report and in-situ protection to nestings was suggested by PCCF & CWLW. Action: WLW, Chennai</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Forest Department to take action to involve more turtle volunteers to support conservation initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forest department has already created a portal for volunteers to register for 	<p>The Wildlife Warden was requested to give functional dashboard details and step up night patrols with the help of</p>

	<p>participation in turtle conservation activities and same should be well publicized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sagar mitras of Fisheries department in fishing villages may also be involved. 	<p>volunteers.</p> <p>Already Sagar Mitras in fishing villages were involved in turtle conservation activities.</p> <p>Action: Wildlife Warden, Chennai / Fisheries Department</p>
13	<p>To instruct the local bodies to control the movement of stray dogs in and around the nesting areas during turtle nesting season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BMAD volunteered to help with Animal birth control measures to be carried out to avoid multiplication of stray dogs in nesting areas. 	<p>The Wildlife Warden has informed that already he has met the District Collector in this regard and inter departmental meetings would be held on stray dog issue and action taken would be reported.</p> <p>Action: SSTCN / WLW, Chennai</p>
14	<p>Local bodies may take action to regulate unlicensed local eateries along beaches and ensure proper waste disposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulating unregulated usage of beaches. 	<p>The Wildlife Warden has informed that already necessary measures along with co-ordination of Greater Chennai Corporation have been carried out to regulate unlicensed eateries along beaches.</p> <p>Action: Wildlife Warden, Chennai</p>
15	<p>Enforce Ray fish net ban during the period of November to April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray fish nets are banned during the nesting period. It needs to be strictly enforced. 	<p>Fisheries department informed that awareness is continuously being carried out in this regard. It was informed that no case has been brought to notice on use of banned Ray fish net in boats. However its compliance needs to be checked by the joint patrolling parties.</p>

16	<p>To instruct the Local bodies to strictly implement ban of beach front lighting during turtle nesting period as ordered in G.O. (Ms)No.35, Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MC-1) Department, dated 31.01.2011.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the ban of beach front lighting during the turtle nesting period. The same need to be monitored while making turtle walks. 	<p>The Wildlife Warden informed that already action has been taken with Greater Chennai Corporation and it was requested to share the communication with Nodal Task Force. Since turtles would be disoriented by beach front lighting it is significant to be monitored as a special case.</p> <p>Action: Wildlife Warden, Chennai</p>
17	<p>Forest Department should increase no of post mortem carried out in cases of turtle mortality (minimum 50%) so that some scientific conclusion on cause of death may be arrived.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postmortem reports of turtle mortality. The report of various samples collected to analyze mortality reasons. 	<p>The Wildlife Warden has reported that 106 postmortem reports were submitted as on date and postmortem process is in progress by Veterinarians of Animal Husbandry Department.</p> <p>Action: Wildlife Warden, Chennai</p>
18	<p>Long term telemetry studies on movement of turtles along Tamil Nadu Coast may be undertaken to collect proper scientific data on turtle movement and local migration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Odisha model scientific data on turtle movement. Anchoring long term telemetry studies to understand turtle movement patterns and habitat usage along the Chennai coast. 	<p>PCCF & Director, AIWC, Vandalur has been requested to initiate necessary action for long term telemetry studies to understand turtle movement patterns and habitat usage along the Chennai coast.</p> <p>Action: PCCF & Director, AIWC, Chennai</p>

The following additional actionable points were deliberated by the members for necessary action.

Sl. No.	Actionable Points	Action to be followed
1	It was requested by the Fishermen Associations to enlighten on authorities to whom pollution and industries discharging effluents complaints may be addressed and it was informed by Deputy Director Department of Environment that the concerned District Collectors and District Environmental Engineers available in each district may be addressed.	The Deputy Director, Department of Environment was requested to inform the action taken on the request by Fishermen Associations.
2	It was requested by the Fishermen Association to check sea water for contamination by plastic wastes and industrial effluents.	The Deputy Director, Department of Environment has informed that necessary action has to be initiated by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and Wildlife Warden was requested to coordinate in the survey.
3	The motorized fishermen boat Association were requested to provide information to the Fisheries Department on specific instances of using motorized boats above 240 hp.	The motorized fishermen boat Association informed that no such instance has been noted so far and it would be informed on happening of any specific instance to Nodal Task Force.
4	The Fishermen Association were requested to inform on boats operated beyond 5 nautical miles and also report the movement of turtle for nesting to shore.	The Fishermen Association informed that necessary information would be provided to Nodal Task Force.
5	It was also requested that the fishing nets may be lifted more	The PCCF & CWLW requested the Fisheries Department to conduct

	frequently, every half hour, to check for trapping of sea turtle in nets, especially during the nesting season.	awareness programmes with local fishermen for better learning of the process during nesting season.
6	It was informed that Forest Department would also hire boats for increased patrolling to bolster the enforcement of fisheries regulation. It was also requested to use technologies like drones to monitor the violations.	The PCCF & CWLW informed that the Forest Department would propose for purchase of own boat by the Department for increased patrolling in budget announcement and at present hired boats are utilized for increased patrolling.

The PCCF & CWLW thanked the participants and requested active cooperation from all the departments for sea-turtle conservation. He also informed that the scheduled date of next meeting will be informed in due course of time.

**Signed by Rakesh Kumar
Dogra**

Date: 06-02-2025 22:10:58

Chairperson

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and
Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai

To:

The Members and Invitees, Nodal Task Force, Sea Turtle Conservation.

Copy submitted to the Principal Secretary to Government, Environment Climate Change and Forest Department, Secretariat, Chennai-9 for kind information.