

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
SOUTHERN ZONE AT CHENNAI
Original Application No.21 of 2025

IN THE MATTER OF:

Tribunal on its own motion Suo Motu based on the News Item in Webdunia Tamil e-newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 20.01.2025, titled "Kaanum Pongal garbage problem: Chennai has forgotten what it learnt after 2015 floods"

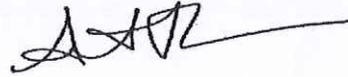
With

The Principal Secretary to Govt of Tamil Nadu,
Department of Environment,
Climate Change and Forests,
Chennai and Others.

....Respondents

INDEX

S.No	Description	Page No.
1.	Action Taken Report filed on behalf of the Third Respondent – Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.	1 - 22
2.	Annexure	24 - 42



Advocate for Respondent: TNPCB
Thiru.S.Sai Sathya Jith,
Advocate, Chennai.

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Tribunal on its own motion Suo Motu based on the News Item in Webdunia Tamil e-newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 20.01.2025, titled "**Kaanum Pongal garbage problem: Chennai has forgotten what it learnt after 2015 floods**"

With

The Principal Secretary to Govt of Tamil Nadu,
Department of Environment,
Climate Change and Forests,
Chennai and Others.

.... Respondents.

ACTION TAKEN REPORT FILED ON BEHALF OF THE THIRD RESPONDENT – TAMIL NADU POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

I, Mr. S. Bharathidasan, Son of Thiru M.Selvaraj, aged about 59 years, having office at No.76, Mount Salai, Guindy, Chennai 600 032, do hereby solemnly affirm and sincerely state as follows:

2. I respectfully submit that I am working as the Joint Chief Environmental Engineer, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Chennai and I am authorized to file this action taken report on behalf of the third respondent and as such I am well acquainted with the facts of the case from the records available in our office.
3. It is respectfully submitted that the Hon'ble NGT, (SZ) on its own taken a SUO MOTU proceeding based on the news item published in Webdunia tamil e-

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newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 20.01.2025 titled, “**Kaanum Pongal garbage problem: Chennai has forgotten what it learnt after 2015 floods**”.

4. It is respectfully submitted that the report filed on behalf of the TNPCB on 27.4.2025 and 11.01.2026 shall be taken as a part and parcel of this action taken report.
5. It is respectfully submitted that as per the direction of the Hon’ble National Green Tribunal, SZ, Chennai on 12.01.2026, the third respondent, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board submits the action taken report herein.

ACTION TAKEN BY TNPCB

In pursuance of the directions passed by the Hon’ble National Green Tribunal (Southern Zone) and the subsequent instructions of the Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Climate Change & Forests (ECCF) Department, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board undertook a series of coordinated, preventive and real time measures to ensure environmentally responsible Kaanum Pongal celebrations within Chennai and across the State.

A. Public Awareness Programme across Chennai Beaches

TNPCB organised an extensive public awareness campaign on 17.01.2026, covering seven major beaches of Chennai which experience the highest footfall during Kaanum Pongal, namely: Marina Beach, Besant Nagar Beach, Thiruvanmiyur Beach, Neelankarai Beach, Akkarai Beach, Palavakkam Beach and Thiruvottiyur Beach. The programme focused on:

- i. Preventing plastic pollution and littering,
- ii. Promoting conservation of marine ecosystems,
- iii. Reinforcing strict compliance with the ban on Single-Use Plastics (SUPs), and


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- iv. Encouraging the public to adopt environmentally sustainable alternatives. Continuous engagement was carried out throughout the event to sensitise visitors, families, vendors and youth groups on the importance of responsible waste handling and protection of coastal environments.



B. Deployment of Blue and Green Brigades

TNPCB mobilized its Blue and Green Brigades to ensure strong on ground presence across all beach locations. These brigades:

- i. Engaged directly with visitors and vendors,
- ii. Disseminated messages on responsible environmental behaviour,
- iii. Explained the impacts of SUPs on marine life and coastal ecosystems,
- iv. Distributed Manjappai to actively discourage the use of plastic carry bags.

The brigades served as the primary public facing environmental awareness teams, significantly enhancing the visibility and effectiveness of the campaign.

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C. Distribution of Manjappai

As part of the Meendum Manjappai Campaign, TNPCB facilitated the distribution of approximately 60,000 Manjappai across Chennai beaches. These were distributed to visitors, vendors and families to encourage the use of cloth bags.



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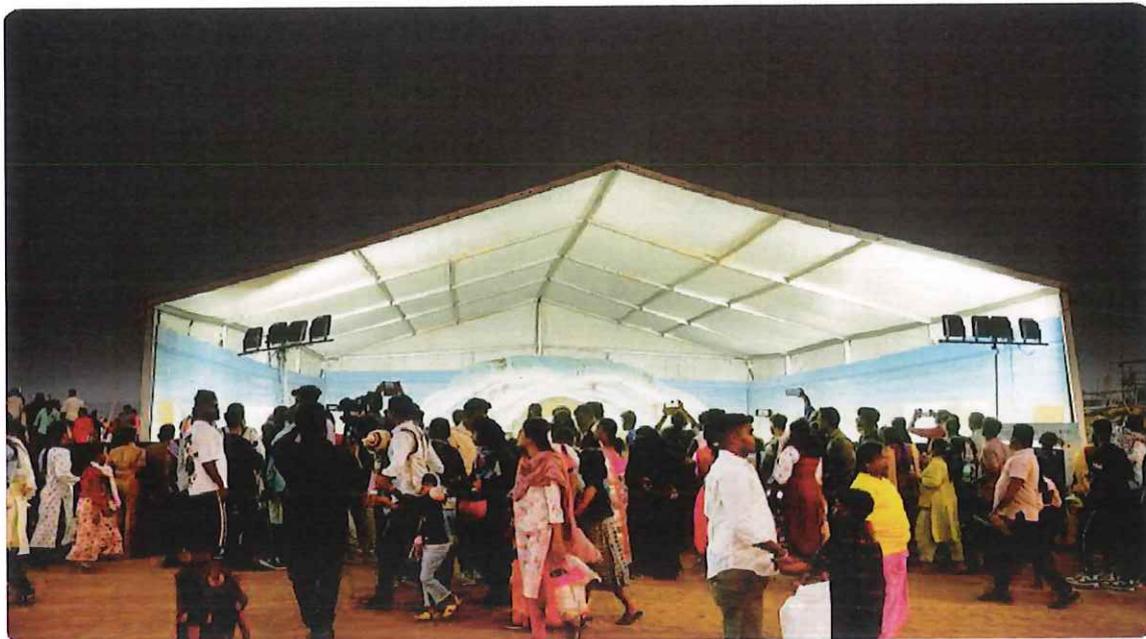
This initiative yielded a positive behavioural change, as numerous visitors transferred items from plastic bags into the Manjappai and disposed of plastic carry bags in designated waste bins.

D. Creative Environmental Installations

TNPCB supported and facilitated the installation of large-scale environmental awareness artworks at prominent beach locations to visually communicate the adverse impacts of plastic pollution on marine life. These included:

- i. A sand art installation at Besant Nagar, featuring a turtle entangled in a fishing net and plastic debris, symbolising the threats faced by marine species due to indiscriminate littering.
- ii. A sand art installation at Neelankarai, depicting a dolphin struggling to emerge from a plastic-filled ocean, highlighting the growing problem of microplastics and marine habitat degradation.
- iii. A fish shaped PET bottles collection unit and a fish-themed temporary installation made from discarded plastic waste was placed at Marina Beach, illustrating how plastic waste accumulates in the marine environment and endangers aquatic organisms.

These installations emerged as major public attraction points, drawing significant attention from visitors and effectively reinforcing environmental messages. The strong visual imagery greatly enhanced public understanding of the harmful effects of plastic pollution and the need for responsible behaviour along Chennai's beaches.



E. Collaboration with NGOs and Waste Management Agencies

TNPCB also collaborated with Urbaser Sumeet, the Greater Chennai Corporation's waste management agency, to widen public outreach during the Kaanum Pongal awareness campaign. As per the action taken reports shared by Urbaser Sumeet, awareness activities were carried out across Zones 9, 13 and 15, covering Marina Beach, Neelankarai, Besant Nagar and Uthandi. As per their report, Urbaser sumeet undertook awareness activities like megaphone announcements on responsible disposal of waste, distribution of pamphlets on SUP ban, and distribution of Manjappai.

F. Directions issued to District Environmental Engineers (DEEs) of Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board

To ensure uniform compliance with NGT's directions across Tamil Nadu, not limited to Chennai, TNPCB issued a detailed memorandum to all District Environmental Engineers. The instructions included:

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- i. Identification and monitoring of high footfall public places in each district during Kaanum Pongal along with Local Bodies.
- ii. Coordination with Local Bodies for adequate waste collection, segregation and timely removal.
- iii. Conduct of public awareness programmes, including distribution of Manjappai, display of signage and engagement with volunteers.
- iv. Ensuring linkage of recyclable waste with authorised recyclers and preventing unauthorised disposal.

G. Outcomes of the Event

- i. As part of the campaign, approximately 60,000 Manjappai bags were distributed free of cost to the public through awareness brigades deployed at each beach. The public response was highly encouraging, with very high footfall observed at all locations.
- ii. Notably, many visitors were observed immediately shifting items from plastic carry bags into the Manjappai and disposing of plastic bags in nearby waste bins. This visible behavioural change demonstrated strong acceptance of sustainable alternatives and the effectiveness of real-time awareness interventions.
- iii. Placards and standees displaying messages on the harmful impacts of plastic litter on marine life, underwater pollution, and the importance of responsible waste disposal were prominently displayed at all locations. Creative installations such as sand art and thematic displays further enhanced public engagement and reinforced environmental messages, particularly among children and youth. The Manjappai were also distributed among the NGOs and the Urbaser Sumeet for conducting the awareness activities.

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In continuation of the consolidated initiatives outlined above, the next section provides beach wise details of activities and public response, capturing how the interventions translated into on ground outcomes across each of the seven Chennai beaches.



I. Beach-wise Activities and Observations.

A. Marina Beach

- i. Marina Beach, which recorded the highest footfall during the Kaanum Pongal celebrations, witnessed exceptionally heavy crowds throughout the day. The visitors included families, tourists, local residents, street vendors, and large groups of youth, making the location an important focal point for outreach activities. In this setting, approximately 20,000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were

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distributed to the public as part of the awareness initiative. Both vendors and visitors displayed a high level of receptiveness, with many readily accepting the Manjappai and using them to carry food items, purchases, and personal belongings.

- ii. Notably, several members of the public were observed shifting items from plastic carry bags into the distributed Manjappai. Used plastic bags were, in many cases, disposed of responsibly in designated waste bins, indicating a positive behavioural response.



- iii. To support the information dissemination, informative placards and standees were placed at strategic locations along the beach. These materials provided clear messages on the impacts of plastic pollution, the

importance of avoiding single-use plastics, and responsible waste disposal practices. The placards and standees helped reinforce the messages conveyed by the awareness teams and ensured that key information reached a wider audience, including those who did not engage in direct interactions.

- iv. A key attraction at the site was a fish-themed art installation created entirely from discarded plastic waste and a fish shaped PET bottles collection unit. The installation drew significant attention, especially from children and families, who gathered around it to observe and interact. The tangible and relatable nature of the installation helped convey messages in a simple and effective manner.
- v. Throughout the program duration, continuous engagement by the Brigade and the officials, contributed to improved waste disposal practices along the covered stretch of the beach.



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B. Besant Nagar Beach

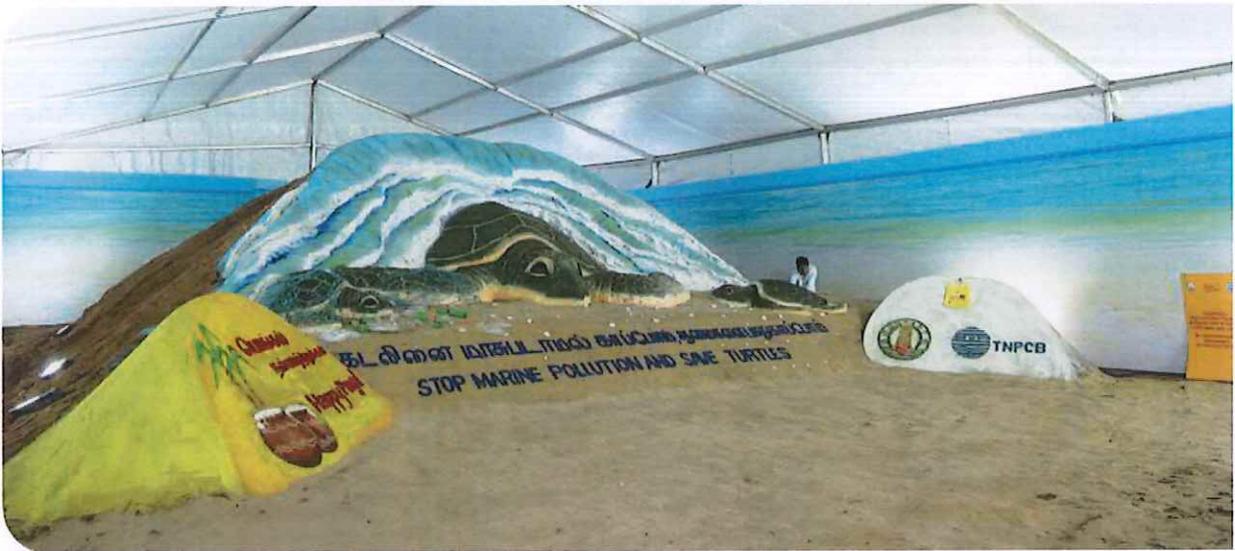
- i. Besant Nagar Beach witnessed steady and enthusiastic participation from the public throughout the duration of the programme. The beach attracted a diverse group of people including, families, school children, youth groups, environmental volunteers, and regular visitors, creating a conducive environment for awareness activities. Approximately 20,000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed at this location, with many visitors willingly accepting and using them as an alternative to plastic carry bags.
- ii. A major highlight of the initiative was the turtle-themed sand art installation created by Padma Shri awardee Thiru Sudarsan Pattnaik. The installation was prominently located and quickly became a strong focal point, drawing attention from visitors. The detailed depiction of a marine turtle that was stranded in discarded fishnet and in Single Use Plastics helped communicate the impact of plastic waste on marine life in an accessible and visually engaging manner. Families and school children were seen spending time near the installation, observing the artwork and discussing its message.

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- iii. Youth groups and environmental enthusiasts actively interacted with the awareness brigade, seeking more information on the initiatives undertaken by TNPCB particularly towards implementation of SUP ban and promotion of eco-alternatives. These interactions helped deepen the understanding beyond the visual appeal of the installation.
- iv. Overall, the installation and the distribution of the Manjappai, supported by continuous engagement from awareness teams, contributed meaningfully to both information dissemination and positive on-ground behavioral responses.

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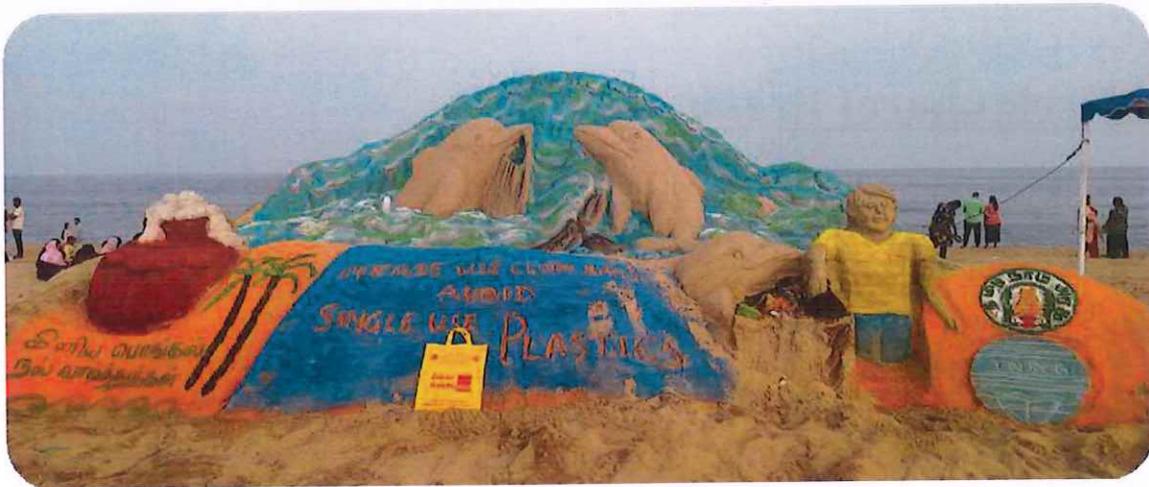


C. Neelankarai Beach

- i. At Neelankarai Beach, the Kaanum Pongal awareness program drew participation from families visiting the shore. A sand art installation depicting dolphins trapped in plastic waste attracted steady attention and served as a visual prompt for discussions on marine pollution. Visitors stopped to observe the artwork, which helped highlight the impact of plastic litter on marine life and encouraged conversations about reducing single-use plastics.

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- ii. During the program, nearly 5,000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed. Many visitors appreciated the durability and reusability of the bags, and several expressed interest in using them as alternatives to single-use plastic for groceries, food takeaway, and everyday use. Children in particular were seen carrying the bags and engaging with awareness placards, suggesting that the campaign's messages were effectively reaching younger audiences through visual storytelling. Overall, the initiative helped to raise awareness about marine pollution, encouraged use of alternatives to single-use plastics, and contributed to keep the beach clean.



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D. Thiruvanmiyur Beach

- i. At Thiruvanmiyur Beach, the outreach programme engaged regular evening walkers, nearby residents, vendors, and families visiting the beach as part of Kaanum Pongal celebrations. Around 5000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed during the programme. Visitors were enthusiastic to receive the bags and expressed interest in using them as an alternative to single-use plastic carry bags.
- ii. Several participants also enquired about the single-use plastic ban, including which items are covered and what alternatives are suitable for everyday use. These interactions reflected a general interest in understanding the regulations and exploring practical alternatives for everyday use.
- iii. Some changes in behaviour were observed during the programme, particularly in waste disposal. Improved waste disposal practices were observed, with visitors making conscious efforts to use designated bins instead of littering the beach. Overall, the activity helped raise awareness about plastic waste and encouraged responsible use of the beach.



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E. Akkarai Beach

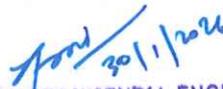
- i. As part of the Kaanum Pongal awareness activities, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) organized a community engagement programme at Akkarai Beach, aimed at promoting responsible waste management and reducing plastic pollution in coastal areas. Around 5000 Manjappai were distributed among visitors, offering practical alternatives to single-use plastics during the festive celebrations.
- ii. During the program, participants had the opportunity to interact with the TNPCB officials and the awareness brigade in focused discussions on the environmental impacts of plastic litter. These discussions emphasized how plastic waste, when left on beaches or disposed of improperly, can enter marine ecosystems, threaten aquatic life, and disrupt the balance of coastal environments.
- iii. By fostering a sense of shared responsibility among visitors, the program encouraged sustainable practices and behavioural change. The increased awareness and active participation observed during the event demonstrate how community engagement can play a key role in protecting coastal and marine environments.


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F. Palavakkam Beach

- i. As part of the Kaanum Pongal awareness activities, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) organized a community engagement initiative at Palavakkam Beach, focusing on reducing plastic litter and preventing pollution associated with increased beach visits during the festival. Approximately 2000 Manjappai were distributed to attendees as practical alternatives to single-use plastics, helping to minimize waste generated during celebrations.


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- ii. Visitors responded positively to TNPCB's preventive approach and participated in discussions on the accumulation of post-festival waste, its impact on coastal and marine ecosystems, and practical steps that individuals and families can take to reduce litter. The awareness sessions highlighted the concept of shared responsibility, encouraging visitors to actively monitor and manage their own waste.



G. Thiruvottiur Beach

- i. Thiruvottiur Beach witnessed enthusiastic participation from the local community during the Kaanum Pongal awareness activities organized by TNPCB. Residents, workers, families, and youth groups came together to engage in efforts aimed at reducing plastic litter and promoting environmental responsibility. Approximately 3000 Manjappai were distributed to beachgoers as part of the initiative, encouraging the use of eco-friendly alternatives to single-use plastics.
- ii. The awareness campaign was further strengthened through the use of informative placards held by the awareness brigade, which highlighted the harmful effects of plastic on marine life and coastal ecosystems. The

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members of the awareness Brigade engaged visitors in discussions about responsible waste disposal and the benefits of minimizing plastic use. The campaign successfully fostered a sense of collective responsibility among the visitors and actively encouraged them to minimize plastic use.



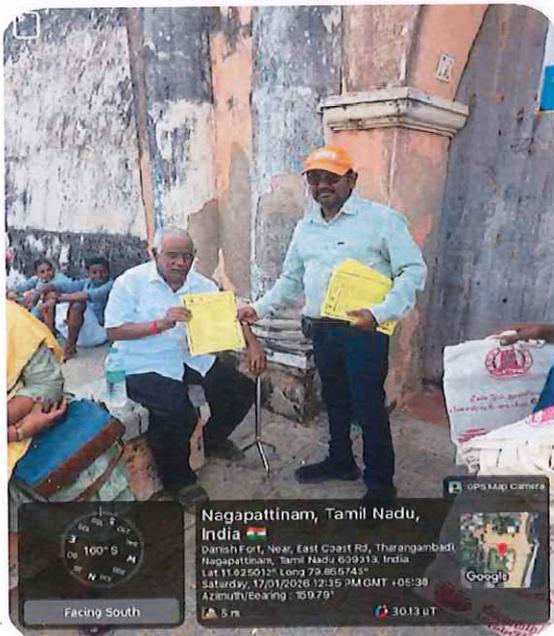
II. Action Taken by District Environmental Engineers, TNPCB (across Tamil Nadu)

- i. In accordance with the instructions issued by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, District Environmental Engineers (DEEs) in various districts across the State undertook awareness and facilitation activities during the Kaanum Pongal celebrations on 17.01.2026, with particular focus on coastal districts, considering the increased public congregation at beaches and the potential risk of marine litter generation during the festival period.
- ii. Awareness programmes were conducted at major public congregation points such as temples, town centres and beach locations in coastal areas, where large inflow of visitors was observed. Special emphasis was laid on preventing littering and avoiding the use of single-use plastics in

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 76, MOUNT SALAI, GUINDY,
 CHENNAI - 600 032.

environmentally sensitive coastal and marine zones. Awareness banners were displayed and pamphlets were distributed to educate the public on the impacts of plastic pollution on coastal and marine ecosystems.

- iii. As part of the outreach activities, Manjappai were distributed to the public to encourage the use of reusable alternatives to single-use plastic carry bags. In beach locations, including prominent coastal stretches, dustbins were installed at multiple points to facilitate proper collection and disposal of solid waste generated during the celebrations, thereby reducing the likelihood of waste entering the marine environment.
- iv. The awareness programmes were carried out with the participation of officials from TNPCB, local bodies and police departments, ensuring coordinated implementation and effective crowd management during the festival period. The above actions reflect the focused efforts of DEEs across districts, other than Chennai, with special attention to coastal areas, to promote plastic-free, litter-free and environmentally responsible Kaanum Pongal celebrations during 2026.



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The action taken report on Environmental Awareness Initiative across Chennai Beaches & Tamil Nadu carried out by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board is enclosed as ANNEXURE.

Therefore, it is humbly prayed that this Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (Southern Zone) may be pleased to pass such order or further other orders as

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this Hon'ble Tribunal may deem fit and proper in the facts and circumstances of this case and thus render justice.

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VERIFICATION

I Mr. S. Bharathidasan, Son of Thiru M.Selvaraj, working as the Joint Chief Environmental Engineer, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Chennai, having office at No.76, Mount Salai, Guindy, Chennai-32, do hereby verify that the contents of above are true to the best of my knowledge through records.

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CHENNAI - 600 032.



Annexure

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MEENDUM
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Kaanum Pongal 2026

Environmental Awareness Initiative
Across Chennai Beaches



கடலினை மாசுபடாமல் காப்போம், ஆமைகளை பாதுகாப்போம்
STOP MARINE POLLUTION AND SAVE TURTLES



An initiative by TNPCB

1 Background

Kaanum Pongal, celebrated on the fourth day of the Pongal festival, is a deeply cherished tradition in Tamil Nadu that embodies togetherness, gratitude, and post harvest community celebration. Families, friends, and visitors typically gather at beaches, riverfronts, parks, and other public spaces to enjoy the festive atmosphere. In Chennai, the city's expansive coastline, from Thiruvottiyur in the north to Akkarai in the south, becomes one of the most prominent and crowded destinations during this occasion.

However, this annual surge in public congregation also leads to a significant spike in waste generation, particularly single use plastics, disposable packaging materials, and mixed litter. Greater Chennai Corporation reported that approximately 100 tonnes of waste was generated on Kaanum Pongal day in 2025. If not effectively managed, such waste settles along the shoreline, enters marine waters, and poses serious threats to coastal ecosystems, marine biodiversity, fisheries, and public health.

2 Directions of Hon'ble National Green Tribunal

The Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (Southern Zone), taking suo motu cognizance of reports on heavy waste generation during Kaanum Pongal, directed the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB), Environment, Climate Change & Forests (ECCF) Department, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, and the District Collectorate, Chennai, to act in a coordinated manner to prevent waste accumulation during the festival.

The NGT further directed that extensive public awareness campaigns be conducted through media and on ground engagement, and permitted the involvement of NSS students, volunteers, and similar groups in the outreach efforts. It also mandated that the Tamil Nadu SCZMA and the Coast Guard ensure that no waste enters the sea during festival days, reinforcing the need for a preventive, environmentally responsible approach across the State.

3 Directions from Government of Tamil Nadu ●

In compliance with the directions issued by the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (Southern Zone) on 08.01.2026 regarding preventive waste management and strengthened environmental safeguards during Kaanum Pongal, the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Environment, Climate Change & Forests (ECCF) Department convened a high level multi departmental coordination meeting on 10.01.2026.

The meeting brought together senior officials from:

- Municipal Administration & Water Supply Department (MAWS)
- Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)
- Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB)
- Commissionerate of Municipal Administration (CMA)

The ACS, ECCF emphasised that, in line with NGT's directions, the approach to Kaanum Pongal must shift from reactive post-event clean-up to preventive, real-time, highly visible waste governance, especially along beaches, high-footfall public areas and tourist locations. Departments were instructed to ensure strict enforcement of the Single-Use Plastic (SUP) ban, deploy adequate manpower and infrastructure, intensify awareness activities, and ensure seamless inter-departmental coordination during the festival period.

In this regard, a multi-departmental coordination meeting was convened in connection with the Kaanum Pongal celebrations. The discussions centered on preventive planning, on-ground enforcement, awareness creation, waste management preparedness, and post-event clean-up, particularly in beaches, tourist locations, water bodies, and high-footfall public spaces. Clear roles and responsibilities were outlined for each department to ensure a clean, plastic-free, and environmentally responsible celebration.

2.1 Summary of Department-wise Action Points

A. Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)

Operational Measures

- Deploy adequate bins (wet/dry/recyclable) at short intervals, especially near entry points, food zones and congregation areas.
- Ensure continuous three-shift cleaning operations with real-time waste removal.
- Install adequate mobile toilets at all beaches.
- Display GCC machinery and operations prominently to reinforce public confidence.

Regulation and Enforcement

- Enforce strict compliance by beachside eateries.
- Mandatory provision of waste bins.
- Penalty and closure of non-compliant units.
- Impose spot fines for littering without exception.

Awareness and Behaviour Change

- Install large, clear, multilingual signages with messages.
- Distribute Manjappai at beach entry points, bus stops and parking areas.
- Install water ATMs / drinking water kiosks to reduce single-use plastic bottles.

B. Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB)

- Mobilize Blue and Green Brigades for Manjappai distribution
- Ensure segregated plastic waste is transported only to authorized recyclers.
- Facilitate creative awareness through Sand art, Temporary marine-life installations and Interactive messaging with the public

C. Municipal Administration & Water Supply Department (MAWS)

- Issue advisories to all coastal Urban Local Bodies to replicate the measures discussed.
- Ensure uniform implementation across the State, not limited to Chennai.
- Monitor readiness and compliance through field inspections.

4 Action taken by TNPCB

In pursuance of the directions issued by the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (Southern Zone) and the subsequent instructions of the Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Climate Change & Forests (ECCF) Department, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board undertook a series of coordinated, preventive and real time measures to ensure environmentally responsible Kaanum Pongal celebrations within Chennai and across the State. The actions taken by TNPCB are summarised below:

A. Public Awareness Programme Across Chennai Beaches

TNPCB organised an extensive public awareness campaign on 17.01.2026, between 1:00 PM and 7:00 PM, covering seven major beaches of Chennai which experience the highest footfall during Kaanum Pongal, namely: Marina Beach, Besant Nagar Beach, Thiruvanmiyur Beach, Neelankarai Beach, Akkarai Beach, Palavakkam Beach and Thiruvottiyur Beach.

The programme focused on:

- Preventing plastic pollution and littering,
- Promoting conservation of marine ecosystems,
- Reinforcing strict compliance with the ban on Single-Use Plastics (SUPs), and
- Encouraging the public to adopt environmentally sustainable alternatives.

Continuous engagement was carried out throughout the event to sensitise visitors, families, vendors and youth groups on the importance of responsible waste handling and protection of coastal environments.



B. Deployment of Blue and Green Brigades

TNPCB mobilised its Blue and Green Brigades to ensure strong on ground presence across all beach locations. These brigades:

- Engaged directly with visitors and vendors,
- Disseminated messages on responsible environmental behaviour,
- Explained the impacts of SUPs on marine life and coastal ecosystems,
- Distributed Manjappai to actively discourage the use of plastic carry bags.

The brigades served as the primary public facing environmental awareness teams, significantly enhancing the visibility and effectiveness of the campaign.



C. Distribution of Manjappai

As part of the Meendum Manjappai Campaign, TNPCB facilitated the distribution of approximately 60,000 Manjappai across Chennai beaches. These were distributed to visitors, vendors and families to encourage the use of cloth bags.



29

This initiative yielded a positive behavioural change, as numerous visitors transferred items from plastic bags into the Manjappai and disposed of plastic carry bags in designated waste bins.

D. Creative Environmental Installations

TNPCCB supported and facilitated the installation of large-scale environmental awareness artworks at prominent beach locations to visually communicate the adverse impacts of plastic pollution on marine life. These included:

- A sand art installation at Besant Nagar, featuring a turtle entangled in a fishing net and plastic debris, symbolising the threats faced by marine species due to indiscriminate littering.
- A sand art installation at Neelankarai, depicting a dolphin struggling to emerge from a plastic-filled ocean, highlighting the growing problem of microplastics and marine habitat degradation.
- A fish shaped PET bottles collection unit and a fish-themed temporary installation made from discarded plastic waste was placed at Marina Beach, illustrating how plastic waste accumulates in the marine environment and endangers aquatic organisms.

These installations emerged as major public attraction points, drawing significant attention from visitors and effectively reinforcing environmental messages. The strong visual imagery greatly enhanced public understanding of the harmful effects of plastic pollution and the need for responsible behaviour along Chennai's beaches.



E. Collaboration with NGOs and Waste Management Agencies

TNPCB also collaborated with Urbaser Sumeet, the Greater Chennai Corporation's waste management agency, to widen public outreach during the Kaanum Pongal awareness campaign. As per the action taken reports shared by Urbaser Sumeet, awareness activities were carried out across Zones 9, 13 and 15, covering Marina Beach, Neelankarai, Besant Nagar and Uthandi. As per their report, Urbaser sumeet undertook awareness activities like megaphone announcements on responsible disposal of waste, distribution of pamphlets on SUP ban, and distribution of Manjappai.

F. Directions Issued to District Environmental Engineers (DEEs), TNPCB

To ensure uniform compliance with NGT's directions across Tamil Nadu, not limited to Chennai, TNPCB issued a detailed memorandum to all District Environmental Engineers. The instructions included:

- Identification and monitoring of high footfall public places in each district during Kaanum Pongal along with Local Bodies.
- Coordination with Local Bodies for adequate waste collection, segregation and timely removal.
- Conduct of public awareness programmes, including distribution of Manjappai, display of signage and engagement with volunteers.
- Ensuring linkage of recyclable waste with authorised recyclers and preventing unauthorised disposal.

4.1.1 Outcomes of the event

As part of the campaign, approximately 60,000 Manjappai bags were distributed free of cost to the public through awareness brigades deployed at each beach. The public response was highly encouraging, with very high footfall observed at all locations.

Notably, many visitors were observed immediately shifting items from plastic carry bags into the Manjappai and disposing of plastic bags in nearby waste bins. This visible behavioural change demonstrated strong acceptance of sustainable alternatives and the effectiveness of real-time awareness interventions.

Placards and standees displaying messages on the harmful impacts of plastic litter on marine life, underwater pollution, and the importance of responsible waste disposal were prominently displayed at all locations. Creative installations such as sand art and thematic displays further enhanced public engagement and reinforced environmental messages, particularly among children and youth. The Manjappai were also distributed among the NGOs and the Urbaser Sumeet for conducting the awareness activities.

In continuation of the consolidated initiatives outlined above, the next section provides beach wise details of activities and public response, capturing how the interventions translated into on ground outcomes across each of the seven Chennai beaches.



4.2 Beach-wise Activities and Observations

4.2.1 Marina Beach

Marina Beach, which recorded the highest footfall during the Kaanum Pongal celebrations, witnessed exceptionally heavy crowds throughout the day. The visitors included families, tourists, local residents, street vendors, and large groups of youth, making the location an important focal point for outreach activities. In this setting, approximately 20,000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed to the public as part of the awareness initiative. Both vendors and visitors displayed a high level of receptiveness, with many readily accepting the Manjappai and using them to carry food items, purchases, and personal belongings.

Notably, several members of the public were observed shifting items from plastic carry bags into the distributed Manjappai. Used plastic bags were, in many cases, disposed of responsibly in designated waste bins, indicating a positive behavioural response.



To support the information dissemination, informative placards and standees were placed at strategic locations along the beach. These materials provided clear messages on the impacts of plastic pollution, the importance of avoiding single-use plastics, and responsible waste disposal practices. The placards and standees helped reinforce the messages conveyed by the awareness teams and ensured that key information reached a wider audience, including those who did not engage in direct interactions.

A key attraction at the site was a fish-themed art installation created entirely from discarded plastic waste and a fish shaped PET bottles collection unit. The installation drew significant attention, especially from children and families, who gathered around it to observe and interact. The tangible and relatable nature of the installation helped convey messages in a simple and effective manner.

Throughout the program duration, continuous engagement by the Brigade and the officials, contributed to improved waste disposal practices along the covered stretch of the beach.



1.2.2 Besant Nagar Beach

Besant Nagar Beach witnessed steady and enthusiastic participation from the public throughout the duration of the programme. The beach attracted a diverse group of people including, families, school children, youth groups, environmental volunteers, and regular visitors, creating a conducive environment for awareness activities. Approximately 20,000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed at this location, with many visitors willingly accepting and using them as an alternative to plastic carry bags.

A major highlight of the initiative was the turtle-themed sand art installation created by Padma Shri awardee Thiru Sudarsan Pattnaik. The installation was prominently located and quickly became a strong focal point, drawing attention from visitors. The detailed depiction of a marine turtle that was stranded in discarded fishnet and in Single Use Plastics helped communicate the impact of plastic waste on marine life in an accessible and visually engaging manner. Families and school children were seen spending time near the installation, observing the artwork and discussing its message.



Youth groups and environmental enthusiasts actively interacted with the awareness brigade, seeking more information on the initiatives undertaken by TNPCB particularly towards implementation of SUP ban and promotion of eco-alternatives. These interactions helped deepen the understanding beyond the visual appeal of the installation.

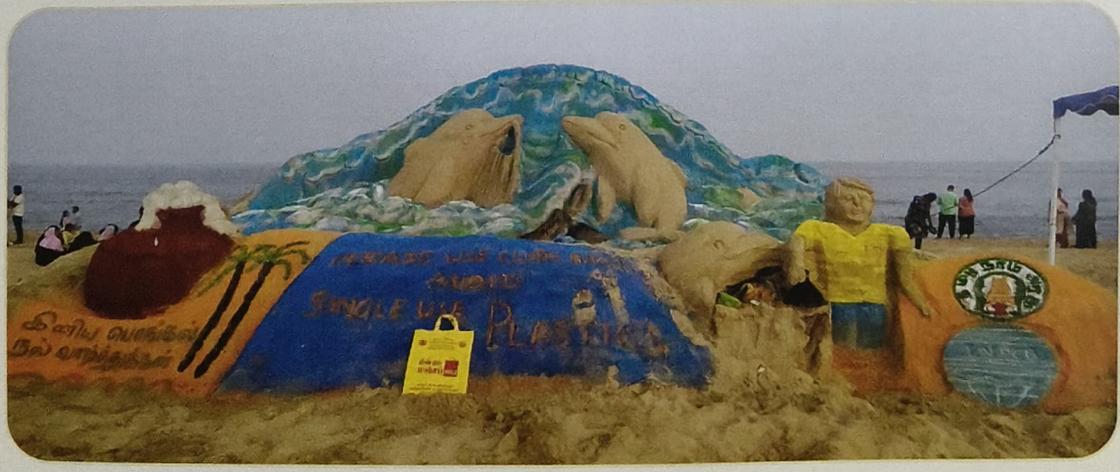
Overall, the installation and the distribution of the Manjappai, supported by continuous engagement from awareness teams, contributed meaningfully to both information dissemination and positive on-ground behavioural responses.



4.2.3 Neelankarai Beach

At Neelankarai Beach, the Kaanum Pongal awareness program drew participation from families visiting the shore. A sand art installation depicting dolphins trapped in plastic waste attracted steady attention and served as a visual prompt for discussions on marine pollution. Visitors stopped to observe the artwork, which helped highlight the impact of plastic litter on marine life and encouraged conversations about reducing single-use plastics.

During the program, nearly 5,000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed. Many visitors appreciated the durability and reusability of the bags, and several expressed interest in using them as alternatives to single-use plastic for groceries, food takeaway, and everyday use. Children in particular were seen carrying the bags and engaging with awareness placards, suggesting that the campaign's messages were effectively reaching younger audiences through visual storytelling. Overall, the initiative helped to raise awareness about marine pollution, encouraged use of alternatives to single-use plastics, and contributed to keep the beach clean.



4.2.4 Thiruvananthapuram Beach

At Thiruvananthapuram Beach, the outreach programme engaged regular evening walkers, nearby residents, vendors, and families visiting the beach as part of Kaanum Pongal celebrations. Around 5000 Manjappai (cloth bags) were distributed during the programme. Visitors were enthusiastic to receive the bags and expressed interest in using them as an alternative to single-use plastic carry bags.

Several participants also enquired about the single-use plastic ban, including which items are covered and what alternatives are suitable for everyday use. These interactions reflected a general interest in understanding the regulations and exploring practical alternatives for everyday use.

Some changes in behaviour were observed during the programme, particularly in waste disposal. Improved waste disposal practices were observed, with visitors making conscious efforts to use designated bins instead of littering the beach. Overall, the activity helped raise awareness about plastic waste and encouraged responsible use of the beach.



4.2.5 Akkarai Beach

As part of the Kaanum Pongal awareness activities, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) organized a community engagement programme at Akkarai Beach, aimed at promoting responsible waste management and reducing plastic pollution in coastal areas. Around 5000 Manjappai were distributed among visitors, offering practical alternatives to single-use plastics during the festive celebrations.

During the program, participants had the opportunity to interact with the TNPCB officials and the awareness brigade in focused discussions on the environmental impacts of plastic litter. These discussions emphasized how plastic waste, when left on beaches or disposed of improperly, can enter marine ecosystems, threaten aquatic life, and disrupt the balance of coastal environments.

By fostering a sense of shared responsibility among visitors, the program encouraged sustainable practices and behavioural change. The increased awareness and active participation observed during the event demonstrate how community engagement can play a key role in protecting coastal and marine environments.



4.2.6 Palavakkam Beach

As part of the Kaanum Pongal awareness activities, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) organized a community engagement initiative at Palavakkam Beach, focusing on reducing plastic litter and preventing pollution associated with increased beach visits during the festival. Approximately 2000 Manjappai were distributed to attendees as practical alternatives to single-use plastics, helping to minimize waste generated during celebrations.

Visitors responded positively to TNPCB's preventive approach and participated in discussions on the accumulation of post-festival waste, its impact on coastal and marine ecosystems, and practical steps that individuals and families can take to reduce litter. The awareness sessions highlighted the concept of shared responsibility, encouraging visitors to actively monitor and manage their own waste.



4.2.7 Thiruvottiyur Beach

Thiruvottiyur Beach witnessed enthusiastic participation from the local community during the Kaanum Pongal awareness activities organized by TNPCB. Residents, workers, families, and youth groups came together to engage in efforts aimed at reducing plastic litter and promoting environmental responsibility. Approximately 3000 Manjappai were distributed to beachgoers as part of the initiative, encouraging the use of eco-friendly alternatives to single-use plastics.

The awareness campaign was further strengthened through the use of informative placards held by the awareness brigade, which highlighted the harmful effects of plastic on marine life and coastal ecosystems. The members of the awareness Brigade engaged visitors in discussions about responsible waste disposal and the benefits of minimizing plastic use. The campaign successfully fostered a sense of collective responsibility among the visitors and actively encouraged them to minimize plastic use.



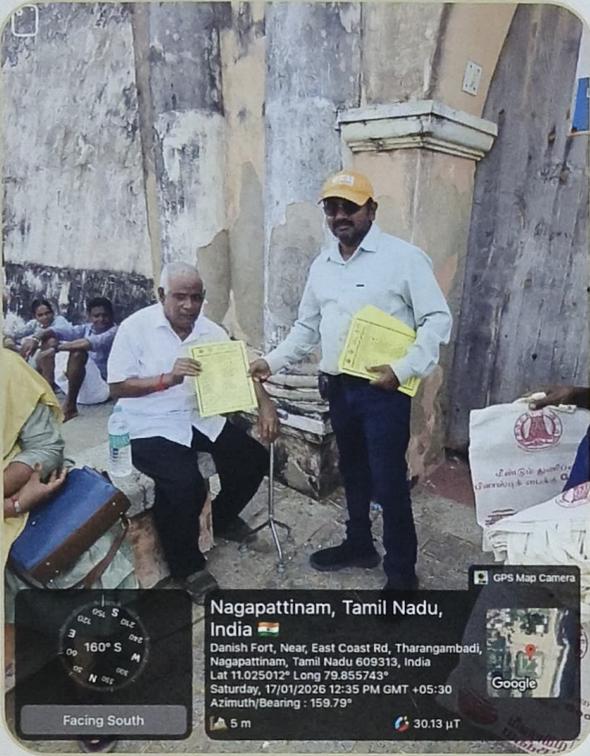
5 Action Taken by District Environmental Engineers, TNPCB (across Tamil Nadu)

In accordance with the instructions issued by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, District Environmental Engineers (DEEs) in various districts across the State undertook awareness and facilitation activities during the Kaanum Pongal celebrations on 17.01.2026, with particular focus on coastal districts, considering the increased public congregation at beaches and the potential risk of marine litter generation during the festival period.

Awareness programmes were conducted at major public congregation points such as temples, town centres and beach locations in coastal areas, where large inflow of visitors was observed. Special emphasis was laid on preventing littering and avoiding the use of single-use plastics in environmentally sensitive coastal and marine zones. Awareness banners were displayed and pamphlets were distributed to educate the public on the impacts of plastic pollution on coastal and marine ecosystems.

As part of the outreach activities, Manjappai were distributed to the public to encourage the use of reusable alternatives to single-use plastic carry bags. In beach locations, including prominent coastal stretches, dustbins were installed at multiple points to facilitate proper collection and disposal of solid waste generated during the celebrations, thereby reducing the likelihood of waste entering the marine environment.

The awareness programmes were carried out with the participation of officials from TNPCB, local bodies and police departments, ensuring coordinated implementation and effective crowd management during the festival period. The above actions reflect the focused efforts of DEEs across districts, other than Chennai, with special attention to coastal areas, to promote plastic-free, litter-free and environmentally responsible Kaanum Pongal celebrations during 2026.



Nagappattinam, Tamil Nadu, India
 Danish Fort, Near, East Coast Rd, Tharangambadi, Nagappattinam, Tamil Nadu 609313, India
 Lat 11.025012° Long 79.855743°
 Saturday, 17/01/2026 12:35 PM GMT +05:30
 Azimuth/Bearing : 159.79°
 5 m 30.13 μT



Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, India
 Thanjavur Main Road, And, Circle, Valayapettai Agraharam, Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu 612001, India
 Lat 10.958574° Long 79.371377°
 Saturday, 17/01/2026 04:44 PM GMT +05:30



மாவட்ட நிர்வாகம்
தமிழ்நாடு மாகாண கட்டுப்பாடு வாரியம்
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**BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL
GREEN TRIBUNAL
SOUTHERN ZONE AT CHENNAI
Original Application No.21 of 2025**

IN THE MATTER OF:

Tribunal on its own motion Suo Motu based on the News Item in Webdunia Tamil e-newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 20.01.2025, titled **“Kaanum Pongal garbage problem: Chennai has forgotten what it learnt after 2015 floods”**

With

The Principal Secretary to Govt of Tamil Nadu,
Department of Environment,
Climate Change and Forests,
Chennai and Others.

...Respondents

**Action Taken Report filed on behalf of the
Third Respondent – Tamil Nadu Pollution
Control Board.**

Thiru.S.Sai Sathya Jith,
Advocate for 3rd Respondent: TNPCB

Date: 30.01.2026

Date of hearing on:02.02.2026