

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL**  
**SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI**  
**Original Application No. 23 of 2024 (SZ)**

**In the matter of:**

Tribunal on its own motion SUO MOTU based on the News Item in The Indian Express Dt. 03.11.2023 titled "Tamilnadu Activities Allege drinking water supplied from Madambakkam lake in Tambaram contaminated with sewage, civic body disagrees"

Versus

Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board,  
Through its Member Secretary Chennai and Ors.

...Respondent(s)

**REPORT FILED BY THE 4<sup>th</sup> RESPONDENT –**  
**THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR, CHENGALPATTU.**

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Through

Dr. D. Shanmuganathan

Standing Counsel for Government of Tamil Nadu

National Green Tribunal

Southern Zone, Chennai

**DATE:03.01.2026**

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL,  
SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI  
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Tribunal on its own motion SUO MOTU based  
On the News item in The Indian Express  
Dt.03.11.2023 titled "Tamilnadu: Activists allege  
drinking water supplied from Madambakkam lake  
in Tambaram contaminated with sewage,  
civic body disagrees"

...Applicant

**Versus**

**(1) Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB)**

Through Its Member Secretary,  
76, Mount Salai, Guindy,  
Chennai- 600 032  
Phone: 044-22353134  
E-mail: [grievance@tnpcb.gov.in](mailto:grievance@tnpcb.gov.in)

**(2) Tambaram City Municipal Corporation,**

Through Its Commissioner,  
28, Muthuranga Mudali Street,  
Tambaram West, Chennai – 600 045  
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**(3) Central Pollution Control Board,**

Rep. by its Regional Director,  
Regional Directorate Chennai,  
77-A, Padi, Ambattur Industrial Estate,  
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**(4) The District Collector,**

Chengalpattu District,  
Collector Office, GST Road,  
Chengalpattu-603.001.

  
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Phone: 044-27427412

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**(5) Engineer in Chief (Water Resources Organisation)**

And Chief Engineer (General),

Public Works Department,

Chepauk, Chennai- 600 005.

Phone: 044-28410402

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**(6) Tamil Nadu Water and Drainage Board (TWAD),**

Through its Managing Director,

TWAD Board, 31, Kamarajar Salai,

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**(7) Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority**

Through its Member Secretary,

Thalamuthu-Natarajan Maaligai,

No.1, Gandhi Irwin Road,

Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.

**(8) K. Sivanandam s/o N.K.K. Krishna Sami**

M/S Ocean Lake View Kumarasamy Garden

....Respondents

**STATUS REPORT FILED BY THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR,**

**CHENGALPATTU**

I, D.Sneha, IAS D/o Mr.K.M.Divakaran aged about 33 years residing at the Collector's bungalow, Chengalpattu, discharging duties as District Collector, Chengalpattu, do hereby solemnly affirm and sincerely state as follows:-

1. It is submitted that Hon'ble Tribunal, based on the news item reported in the Indian Express Dt.03.11.2023 titled "Tamil Nadu: Activists Allege drinking water supplied from Madambakkam lake in Tambaram

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contaminated with sewage, civic body disagrees” has SUO MOTU taken up the subject matter for adjudication.

2. It is submitted that when the above case came up for hearing on 03.07.2025, Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to issue the following Direction:

*“ The Tambaram City Municipal Corporation has filed its report dated 02.07.2025.*

*2. The 8th Respondent has filed an objection along with a layout plan. However, the plan lacks clarity with respect to the extent of the buffer zone beyond the 7.5- meter road indicated therein.*

*3. The District Collector, Chengalpattu District, has submitted a status report dated 02.07.2025, wherein it is stated that, during the public hearing, residents of Greater Kailash Nagar, Yashwant Nagar, and ALS Nagar expressed concerns that the drain canal connecting their residential area to the lake has been significantly narrowed due to the proposed project, raising apprehensions of water stagnation during the monsoon season.*

*4. The District Collector, however, has not furnished details regarding the original width of the drain canal from the above residential colonies into the lake, nor the extent to which it has been reduced due to the layout development. Let the said particulars be furnished.*

*5. While it has been stated that a compound wall was constructed within 3 meters of the lake, the learned counsel appearing for the 8th Respondent submitted that the said wall has been removed.*

*6. From the records available, the water spread area and the buffer zone pertaining to Madambakkam Lake are not clearly demarcated. Hence, the Water Resources Department is directed to furnish precise details in this regard.*

*7. The learned counsel for the Water Resources Department has submitted that the said lake is included in the National Wetland Atlas prepared by ISRO. If that is so, relevant particulars shall also be furnished by the State Wetland Authority through the District Collector.*

8. It is also observed that the CMDA must ensure due verification before approving any layout, particularly those situated adjacent to water bodies, including verification of the extent of the buffer zone and the alignment of the drain canal leading into the water body.

9. The report of the District Collector records that the subject lands were originally classified as reserve forest in the RSR of 1911, and were later reclassified as Punjai Ryotwari lands under private ownership.

10. It would be appropriate to make the above statement based on records. Therefore, the District Collector is directed to furnish the relevant documents indicating the date and details of the conversion of the said lands into Punjai Ryotwari. If proceedings in this regard are available, the same shall also be furnished along with the report."

3. It is submitted that when the above matter was taken up for hearing on 10.10.2025, the Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to adjourn the case to 11.12.2025.
4. It is submitted that the Revenue Divisional Officer, Tambaram, has been requested to furnish details regarding (i) the original width of the drain canal connecting the above residential colonies to the lake, (ii) the extent of reduction in the canal width due to layout development, (iii) the date on which the subject land was converted into *Ryot Punjai* land along with supporting documents for such conversion, and (iv) a field-reality report on the wetland character of Madambakkam Lake, Survey No. 708, through the District-Level Wetlands Management Committee, vide this office letter dated 25.07.2025. The matter has been followed up through periodic reminders, the latest being on 27.10.2025. However, the requested information has not been furnished till date.

5. It is submitted that, with respect to the classification of the area as a wetland under the National Wetland Atlas prepared by ISRO, the State Wetland Authority, in its letter No. TNSW2/452/2024 dated 28.05.2025, has directed that ground truthing, survey, and demarcation of Madambakkam Lake be undertaken. Accordingly, the matter was referred to the District Forest Officer, who constituted a sub-committee to inspect the site and prepare a report. It is submitted that the said report will be furnished in a week's time.
6. It is submitted that, with respect to the relevant documents indicating the date and details of the conversion of the said lands into *Punjai Ryotwari*, the District Forest Officer and the Commissioner of the Tamil Nadu Archives and Historical Research Department have been requested to furnish the necessary records vide this office letter dated 08.10.2025. However, the said details have not been furnished so far.
7. In this regard, Mr. K. Sivanandam, the 8<sup>th</sup> respondent, has submitted a representation dated 29.10.2025 to this office. In the said representation, in addition to his earlier statements as recorded in paragraph 9 of the status report filed by the District Collector on 02.07.2025, the he has stated that Survey No. 723, measuring about 410 acres in Madambakkam Village, was previously classified as forest land, as evidenced from the 1911 Resettlement Register. It is further stated by the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent that the forests in Madambakkam Village, Chengalpattu District, were reclassified, and the rights of the Forest Department were relinquished to the Revenue Department by the Government vide G.O. No. 703, dated 12th May 1925 (Page 25 – Appendix D and Page 39). The 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent herein states that subsequently, in G.O. No. 912, dated 23rd June 1925 (Para 3), and G.O. Misc. No. 2123, Revenue Department, dated 28th October 1927, the Government approved the transfer of 1,081 forests to the respective District Collectors, which included the Madambakkam Forest. The 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent herein further states that

  
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the list of these 1,081 forests is found in G.O. No. 703, dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 1925. Copies of G.O. No. 703 dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 1925, G.O. No. 912 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1925, G.O. Misc. No. 2123, Revenue Department, dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 1927, and Board of Revenue Resolution No. 87 Press, dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 1927, have been enclosed by the 8<sup>th</sup> respondent. These documents were obtained under the Right to Information Act from the Tamil Nadu Archives by the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent herein.

8. It is respectfully submitted that, on perusal of the copies of the Government Orders referred to above which were furnished by the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent, the following position emerges:

- (i) It is respectfully submitted that in the copy of G.O. No. 703, Development Department, dated 12 May 1925 furnished by the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent, a reference is made to the report submitted by Thiru H. Tireman, Acting Chief Conservator of Forests, to the Secretary to Government vide his letter Ref. No. 6516/22-13, dated 7 November 1924. It was recorded therein that in March 1924, the work relating to the classification of forests had been entrusted to Thiru T. A. Whitehead, then Acting Conservator of Forests, Third Circle, and that, pursuant to the said directions, a report on the classification of forests had been submitted by the Chief Conservator of Forests, enclosing the findings of Thiru Whitehead. In the said report, the forests were classified into three categories, namely: (a) those to be retained permanently under the control of the Forest Department; (b) those whose classification was to be postponed until the Panchayats had demonstrated trustworthiness and efficiency in the protection of forests; and (c) those over which the Forest Department might relinquish control. In the report referred to above, vide Ref. No. 6516/22-13, dated 7 November 1924, the land comprised in Map No. 81 of Madambakkam Village, Chengalpattu District, to an extent of 568 acres, was proposed to be classified as forest

  
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land over which the Forest Department might be required to relinquish control, the said area having been identified as a Class III Ryot Forest.

(ii) It further appears from the copy of the said Government Order furnished by the 8th Respondent that, in all districts except Ganjam, the Nilgiris, Malabar, South Kanara, Tanjore, Ramnad and Madras, the lists of forest reserves proposed for classification were to be published in the respective District Gazettes for general information. It was also directed that Local Committees should be constituted in each of the said districts, consisting of the District Collector as President, an Officer of the Forest Department nominated by the Chief Conservator of Forests, and not less than three non-official members nominated by the Collector. These Committees were directed to examine the details of the proposed classification and to submit such recommendations as might be considered necessary. The Chief Conservator of Forests was required to furnish any additional information needed for the deliberations of the Committees, and the reports of the Committees were to be submitted to the Government through the Chief Conservator of Forests at the earliest possible date. It was further directed that separate instructions would be issued in due course regarding the proposal of the Chief Conservator of Forests for the transfer of control of 'Local' or 'Ryot' forests to the Revenue Department.

(iii) As per para 5 of the copy of G.O. No. 912, Development Department, dated 23 June 1925, furnished by the 8th Respondent, it appears that, the Government, after careful consideration, held that, in the interests of both efficient forest administration and the development of the Panchayat system, the control of the Panchayat staff and the forest reserves under Panchayat management shall stand transferred to the Land Revenue Department with effect from 1 July 1925. It was further ordered that, as and when new Panchayats were

  
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constituted, all "Local" forests would automatically\*9 pass from the control of the Forest Department to that of the Land Revenue Department. The Special Forest Panchayat staff were directed to function under the direct supervision of the Land Revenue Department, in coordination with the concerned local authorities, as may be prescribed from time to time.

(iv) As per the copy of G.O. No. 2123, Revenue Department, dated 28th October 1927 furnished by the 8th Respondent, it appears that, the Government accepted the views contained in the Report of the Board of Revenue, and, in view of the fact that out of 1,081 forests classified as 'Ryots' forests' in the Presidency, Panchayats had already been organized for 1,034 forests, directed that all such 'Ryots' forests' for which Panchayats had been formed shall be transferred to the direct control of the respective District Collectors, who shall function under the general supervision of the Board of Revenue. One Forest Panchayat Officer was to be retained. The remaining 'Ryots' forests' were to come under the direct control of the District Collectors as and when Panchayats were formed for their management. The Forest Panchayat Officer was to be regarded as an assistant to the Member of the Board of Revenue in charge of 'Ryots' forests' and as the technical adviser to the District Collectors in matters relating to their management. He was to be retained for a period of two years from 1st September 1927, and the Board of Revenue was to submit proposals for the continuance of his services beyond that period, if considered necessary. The Government also approved the proposals of the Board of Revenue formulated to give effect to the transfer of control over the 'Ryots' Forests' to the respective District Collectors.

  
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9. It is respectfully submitted that, from the foregoing documents submitted by the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent, it appears that the land comprised in Map No. 81 of Madambakkam Village, Chengalpattu District, to an extent of 568 acres, was originally classified as forest land under the administrative control of the Forest Department, and subsequently identified as a Class III Ryot Forest, over which the control of the Forest Department was to be relinquished and transferred to the Revenue Department pursuant to the policy decisions contained in the copies of G.O. No. 703, dated 12th May 1925, G.O. No. 912, dated 23rd June 1925, and G.O. No. 2123, dated 28th October 1927 all furnished by the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent. It is further submitted that, in accordance with the Government Orders, it appears that the process of transfer of such forests, including those situated in Madambakkam Village, to the respective District Collectors was undertaken as part of a larger administrative reorganization aimed at bringing 'Local' or 'Ryot' forests under the direct control of the Land Revenue Department.

10. In pursuance of the above, verification of the genuineness of the documents, that in copies of Government Orders, G.O. No. 703 dated 12.05.1925, G.O. No. 912 dated 23.06.1925, and G.O. Misc. No. 2123 dated 28.10.1927 is required. Accordingly, the Commissioner, Tamil Nadu Archives and Historical Research Department, was requested to furnish authenticated copies of the said records vide this office letter dated 10.12.2025. Further, the Commissioner, Tamil Nadu Archives and Historical Research Department, and the District Forest Officer were also reminded to furnish any available records evidencing the conversion of the lands in Madambakkam Village from Reserve Forest to Punjai Ryotwari classification, vide this office letter dated 10.12.2025. The purpose of seeking these documents is to substantiate the historical reclassification and administrative transfer of the said forest lands with authoritative official evidence.

  
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11. In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the directions of the Hon'ble Tribunal have been complied with to the extent possible on the basis of the records presently available with the District Administration. With respect to the remaining directions repeated communications have been issued to the concerned authorities, but the requisite reports are still awaited. Upon receipt of the same, a comprehensive supplementary report will be duly filed before this Hon'ble Tribunal.

In light of the foregoing facts and records, this status report is respectfully submitted for the kind consideration of this Hon'ble Tribunal and for passing such further orders as may be deemed fit and proper in the circumstances.

Solemnly affirmed at Chengalpattu on  
this the 10<sup>th</sup> day of December 2025  
and signed in my presence.

  
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