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BEFORE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

IN

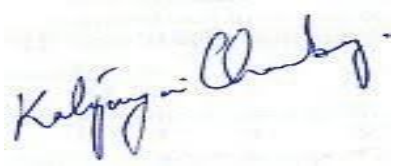
ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 606 OF 2018

IN THE MATTER OF:

COMPLIANCE OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES, 2016 AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

INDEX

Dated: 24.02.2026
New Delhi



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OBSERVATION NOTE FOR THE STATUS REPORT FILED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AND WATER SUPPLY DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU.

In this Original Application, the hon'ble Tribunal is considering the issue of solid as well as liquid waste management as per the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 02.09.2014 in *Writ Petition No. 888/1996, Almitra H. Patel vs. Union of India & Ors.,* with regard to solid waste management and the order dated 22.02.2017 in *W.P. No. 375/2012, reported in (2017) 5 SCC 326, Paryavaran Suraksha vs. Union of India*, with regard to liquid waste management (sewage).

February 2026

The Status Report dated 14.02.2026 filed by the State of Tamil Nadu reveals continuing non-compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and Sewage Management obligations. The State admits a processing gap of 3,104 TPD of solid waste. There is no disclosure regarding interim handling, environmental safeguards, or disposal methodology of such unprocessed waste. Inert waste (537 TPD) continues to be used for filling low-lying areas. In sewage management, 1,050 MLD remains untreated or unutilized, resulting in ongoing discharge into water bodies. Legacy waste quantification suffers from internal inconsistencies, raising concerns regarding data accuracy.

The following is the observation note for the kind perusal of the Hon'ble Tribunal:

TOPIC	OBSERVATION
Population	1. Total population in the State- 7,21,47,030 2. Total urban population- 3,49,17,440 (48.40 %) 3. Total ULBs- 664
Solid Waste	1. Total waste generation- 15,545 TPD 2. Total waste processed- 12441 TPD processed (pg. 3526/ 3635) 3. GAP- 3104 TPD. This continuing gap indicates that nearly one-fifth of the daily waste generated remains inadequately addressed. 4. 5 new scientific landfills @ 1200 TPD has been sanctioned. (including a LWS at Madurai). These facilities, presently do not mitigate the existing shortfall. It is recommended that the State may look into the idea of Zero landfill towns and ULBs. 5. 2 CNG Plants- functional @ 100 MT each (at Chetpet and Madhavaram). 11 Bio CNG plants are under construction, with projected timelines extending between **2027 and 2029**, thereby postponing effective gap reduction. 6. 541 TPD of inter & silt- Currently the inert & Silt waste are used for filling the low-lying areas. Such a practice, in the absence of demonstrated scientific landfill compliance, raises serious concerns regarding environmental safeguards, groundwater contamination, and conformity with statutory requirements. 7. The processing gap is particularly evident in specific Urban Local Bodies. For instance, Madurai generates approximately 815 TPD of solid waste per day. While waste is reportedly routed to Material Recovery Facilities (250 TPD) and Micro Composting Centres (448.5 TPD), a residual quantity of approximately 318 TPD per day continues to be directed to the dumpsite, effectively constituting the unaddressed processing gap (Annexure 13, p. 3623). This ongoing addition to dumpsites undermines claims of comprehensive processing. 8. WTE plant- remain largely at the proposal or construction stage, with long completion timelines. Consequently, they cannot be relied upon as a present solution to bridge the existing processing deficit.

	9. Of serious concern are the compost quality reports. The compost sample analysis from Thirunindravur Municipality (pg. 3822) indicates the presence of heavy metals such as chromium (Cr), lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd), and nickel (Ni). Similarly, the compost sample from Arakkonam (pg. 3909) reflects elevated levels of lead and chromium. The detection of such heavy metals suggests possible cross-contamination at source or during processing. Continued distribution and long-term agricultural application of compost containing heavy metals poses cumulative risks to soil health, groundwater quality, crop safety, and the broader food chain, warranting immediate regulatory scrutiny and corrective measures.
Legacy Waste (pg. 3623, item 9 r/w 3574)	1. 295 identified LWS (Legacy Waste Site)- of which, 269 sites have been fully remediated, recovering 1362 acres of land. However, the report does not disclose the present status, environmental condition, or end-use of the reclaimed land. In the absence of post-remediation land use plans, environmental monitoring data, or safeguards against re-dumping, the sustainability of such remediation remains unclear. 2. Total estimated legacy waste- 309.02 lakh Cu.m 3. With respect to the **Colachel dumpsite (salt pan area)**, it is stated that no fresh waste has been deposited since March 2023. However, the report does not clarify the quantified legacy waste remaining at the site, the timeline for its remediation, or the environmental safeguards in place to prevent leachate contamination, particularly considering the ecological sensitivity of salt pan regions. 4. 2 WTE commissioned- 2100 TPD. Ash disposal and emission monitoring mechanism needs to be clarified by the State. 5. 4 WTE sanctioned- 4100 TPD 6. Utilization of RDF (2722 TPD) at cement factories- Dalmia Cement (Bharat) ltd and Ultra tech 7. GAP- 4,64,298 TPD (pg. 3635), this figure appears inconsistent with the daily waste generation and processing data disclosed elsewhere, suggesting either under-reporting or a possible arithmetic discrepancy. Moreover, as fresh waste continues to be generated daily and, in certain cases, directed to

	existing dumpsites, the cumulative quantum of waste requiring remediation would logically increase over time. Therefore, unless explicitly clarified with methodology and baseline calculations, the estimated quantities of legacy waste may be understated.
Liquid Waste (pg. 3636 Annexure 14)	1. Total estimated generation- 2334.06 MLD (for 648 ULBs) 2. No. of drains- 1653 (including storm water). However, there is no clear distinction between segregated storm water drains and sewage-carrying drains, raising concerns regarding cross-contamination and illegal discharge. 3. Final discharge point of sewage/ contaminated drains- The final discharge points of untreated or partially treated sewage and contaminated drain flows are deeply concerning. The report indicates discharge into backyard farming lands, ponds, lakes, open grounds, wastelands, water channels, irrigation canals, streets**,** and multiple rivers including Manjal, Ambuli, Uppanaru, Korai, Aliyar, Cauvery, Sarabanga, Cooum, Chittar, Devanathi, Old Cauvery, Pamani, Odampokki, Valavan, Vaigai, Nangangiyar, Varaganathi, Mullai Periyar, Periyar, Bhavani, Noyyal, Nankanji, Sanathkumar, Vasista, Seyyar, Thenpennai, Gomuki, Malattar, Palar, Manimutharu, Kadilam, among others. Further, direct or indirect discharge into the sea is reported at **Kanyakumari, Adirampattinam, Rameswaram**, etc. Such widespread discharge points indicate systemic inadequacies in containment and treatment, potentially violating water quality standards and river protection mandates. 4. In 479 Town Panchayats, the estimated sewage generation is 410.58 MLD, whereas the combined installed treatment capacity of 18 STPs/DEWATS, 9 Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs), and certain onsite facilities totals only 75.22 MLD, leaving a significant portion of wastewater either untreated or inadequately managed. 5. 12482 village panchayats generate- 1490.32 MLD, while in-situ management methods are claimed, detailed performance data, groundwater monitoring reports, and verification mechanisms are not adequately disclosed. 6. 78 STP installed capacity- 1445 MLD (pg. 3659) 7. STP utilization capacity- 703 MLD 8. GAP- 1050 MLD (pg. 3659)

	9. Chennai generates 906 MLD and has a treatment system with 957.80 MLD capacity. However, the utilization capacity of the STP is only 667.41 MLD, leaving a significant volume uncollected or bypassed despite adequate nominal capacity. 10. Household connections- 5,18,084. It is pertinent to note that many sewage networks are old and several house connections still remain pending. This infrastructural deficiency appears to be a primary cause of low STP utilization and continued discharge into water bodies. 11. STP outlet report- FC/TC is hazardously high (pg. 3679) Another such STP outlet analysis report is provided where FC/TC at the outlet is very high (pg. 3730) The State may provide for any microbial trend analysis. 12. FPZ- information not provided, particularly in the context of sewage discharge near riverbanks and water bodies. Such disclosure is essential to assess environmental risk and regulatory compliance. 13. CRZ regulation- status may be provided, as there are numerous sewage discharge points into the sea.
Ring Fence Account	₹18,490.35 crores earmarked

SUGGESTIONS:

In light of the foregoing analysis, it is evident that while the State has demonstrated significant structural, operational, and regulatory gaps that continue to impede full compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the binding directions of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal in O.A. No. 606 of 2018. The persisting processing deficits, underutilization of treatment infrastructure, lack of scientific landfill facilities, inconsistencies in legacy waste data, and absence of transparent financial disclosures necessitate urgent corrective intervention.

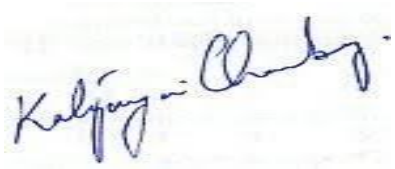
Accordingly, the following suggestions are respectfully proposed to ensure time-bound compliance, strengthen institutional accountability, enhance environmental safeguards, and align implementation with statutory mandates and judicial directions.

Short- term	Medium term	Long term
Mandatory GPS tracking of waste transport. Draft an Action plan for "Zero- landfill towns/ ULBs"	Decentralized composting in high-density wards, alongwith decentralised STPs.	Sewage reuse mandate (industrial/agriculture). The discharge or collection of sewage into natural water streams or open spaces must stand prohibited, as the same is liable to engender the proliferation of waterborne diseases within the affected locality.
Third-party audit of legacy waste and conduct heavy metal audits on all compost	Mandatory bulk waste generator enforcement	Polluter-pays enforcement for non-segregation of solid waste and discharge of pollutants in water bodies
Mandatory real-time STP dashboard	Performance-linked grants to ULBs	Strict timeline with penalty matrix for non-compliance of timelines
Public disclosure portal for Solid and liquid waste	Mandatory segregation of solid and other waste at source	Education at school and college level regarding segregation and disposal of waste. Environment education Judgment by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in M.C. Mehta v. Union of India [Writ Petition (Civil) No. 860 of 1991; (1992) 1 SCC 358: AIR 1992 SC 382]

The observation note is respectfully submitted for the kind perusal of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi.

AND FOR THIS ACT OF KINDNESS, THE ADVOCATE AS IN DUTY BOUND SHALL EVER BE GRATEFUL.

Dated: 24.02.2026
New Delhi



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