

**BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREENTRIBUNAL.  
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI**

**ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 1063/2024**

IN THE MATTER OF:

News Item titled "Pollution Control Board reels in  
Ghost nests" appearing in the Times of India

Dated.04.08.2024.

**REPLY AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT NO.11  
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES, STATE OF TAMIL NADU**

1. Tmt.R.Gajalakshmi, IAS., , being the Commissioner of Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare, 3rd Floor, Integrated Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Building, Nandanam, Chennai - 600 035 do hereby solemnly affirm and sincerely state as follows:-

I am the respondent herein and I am well acquainted with the facts of this case as per records. I swear this affidavit is filed on my behalf.

2. I do hereby state and submit that, by its order dated 14.08.2024, the Hon'ble Tribunal, upon taking suo motu cognizance of the news article titled "Pollution Control Board Reels in Ghost Nets" published in The Times of India on 04.08.2024, was pleased to hold as follows

3. The article highlights that "HDPE (high-density polyethylene) or nylon fishnets wear out every six months to a year. If stuck in a rock while fishing, we yank the net out. But it tears, and the torn bit goes underwater, strangling fish such as anchovies and prawns,"This affects fish reproduction and our business. Not every fisherman is aware of the dangers of ghost nets."Biodiversity suffers as well. "Marine mammals such as turtles and whales that come up to breathe can get caught in ghost nets. These nets also lead to algal growth if

they strangle coral reefs. The bundled-up, torn nets also cause sanitation and health issues, particularly during the monsoon”.

The aforementioned news article reveals a violation of the provisions laid down under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, as well as the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019, particularly Clause 2.1.1 concerning CRZ-IA zones.

I state that the Hon'ble Tribunal impleaded the answering as Respondent No. 11 and directed filing of a response/reply.

4. I respectfully state and submit that in compliance with the order dated 14.08.2024 passed by this Hon'ble Tribunal, whereby the answering Respondent, i.e., the Department of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, was directed to file its reply in the present matter, the 11<sup>th</sup> Respondent is hereby submitting reply.

5. The fishers in the State employ various types of fishing gears, including but not limited to gill nets, trawl nets, and hook-and-line methods. That in the course of such fishing activities, the likelihood of fishing nets being discarded into the sea is significantly minimized, due to the presence of net mending units established at all the fish landing centers across the State, where torn or damaged nets are routinely repaired or discarded on land in an environmentally responsible manner. This practice contributes to the prevention of marine pollution and promotes sustainable fishing operations among the coastal fishing communities.

6. It is submitted that the Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu, is one of the stakeholder department coordinating with the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB), in taking proactive measures to address pollution arising from discarded, damaged, and torn fishing nets.

7. That, in order to mitigate the environmental hazards caused by Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and to safeguard marine biodiversity, Department of Environment Climate Change and Forest, Government of Tamil Nadu, in its policy announcement for the year 2023-2024, launched the Tamil Nadu Fishnet Initiative. Under this initiative, the Government has declared the establishment of discarded fishnet collection centres for abandoned and discarded fishnets, with the objective of preventing marine litter and reducing the adverse impact on marine ecosystems. In pursuance of the above, the first such collection centre was established at Kasimedu Fishing Harbour in Chennai. This initiative was implemented in coordination with stakeholders and Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare Department and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB).

That the contents of this reply affidavit have been read over and explained to me in a language I understand. I affirm that I have fully understood the contents thereof, and I state that the facts mentioned herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, based on information derived from official records

8. That I affirm that the contents of this affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that no part of it is false, nor has any material fact been concealed.

*15/7/25*  
Commissioner

Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare

*15/07/2025*



**ABSTRACT**

Environment, Climate Change – Announcement for the year 2023-24 – Implementation of the “Tamil Nadu Fishnet Initiative” to reduce Marine Litter from Discarded Fishnets – Orders – Issued.

**ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOREST (EC.2) DEPARTMENT**

G.O.(Ms).No.183

Dated: 22.12.2023

சோபகிருது, மார்சுழி -6

திருவள்ளூர் ஆண்டு -2054

**Read:**

G.O (Ms) No. 116, Environment, Climate Change and Forest (EC2) Department, dt. 27.11.2021

Announcement made by Hon'ble Minister for Environment and Climate Change on floor of Tamil Nadu Assembly 2023-24.

From the Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board letter T1/TNPCB/ F.010082/PWM/TNFI/2023-1 dt. 02.09.2023.

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**ORDER: -**

The world is currently grappling with a crisis caused by the widespread problem of plastic pollution and marine debris. This issue poses a significant threat to marine life, with marine plastic debris being particularly problematic. About 80% of marine litter (Source: United Nation Environment Program) affecting the world's oceans emanate from terrestrial sources while 20% assumed to be derived from marine-based sources consists of Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG). Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), commonly known as “ghost net” is identified as the most detrimental form of marine plastic debris. It endangers marine animals by entangling them in fishing gear, leading to an increased risk of fatalities among marine species.

2. Discarded fishing nets, ALDFG have significant ecological, commercial and social consequences, including habitat degradation, indiscriminate fishing and entanglements, decreased catches, at-sea-safety hazards and risk to vessel damage. These ALDFG, ghost nets, continue to trap fish even though fishermen have lost control over their use a phenomenon known as “ghost fishing”, causing serious negative impacts on fish stocks, other marine species and benthic habitats. Further, ALDFG breaks down in the marine environment

causing more harm and shedding microplastic fibres, which makes the marine biodiversity more vulnerable.

3. The Government of Tamil Nadu is committed to eliminating plastic pollution including marine plastic debris and is poised to take bold steps to tackle this imminent crisis with the participation of people from all walks of life.

4. With the view of protecting marine biodiversity and avoiding the harmful impact of ALDGF, the Government of Tamil Nadu on the floor of the assembly 2023-24 announced a unique and novel initiative "TN Fishnet Initiative (TNFI)". This will be undertaken by creating an ecosystem for managing discarded fishnets through collection centres for abandoned or discarded fishnets and its recycling through implementing circular economy solutions. The initiative will include the potential design and development of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for producers to be implemented in the State.

5. To protect biodiversity and avoid the harmful impact of Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), the Government of Tamil Nadu will implement the "TN Fishnet Initiative (TNFI)" with the following objectives:-

- ❖ Baseline development for the coastline of Tamil Nadu
- ❖ To establish a mechanism/centre to collect discarded ghost nets and other plastic debris along selected locations for collection centres across the coast of Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ Recycling of recovered discarded fishing nets in order to protect and conserve marine biodiversity and thereby enhance the livelihood of fisher folk by incentivizing the fisher folk.
- ❖ To develop the potential design of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programme for fishing gear producers and bring a policy (advocacy) framework.
- ❖ To improve alternative livelihood options for fisher folk especially the women.

6. An Indo-German Bilateral Technical Cooperation project titled "Circular Economy Solutions preventing Marine Litter in Ecosystems" with the support of German Government Agency viz GIZ and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India is under implementation in Tamil Nadu. The Project may provide support for capacity building and produce knowledge from implementation as well as by creating a network with Stakeholders in the domain. Further, the project will support the development of studies for the extended producer responsibility (EPR) programme for Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear

(ALDFG), with the commercial fishing sector and stakeholder consultations for supporting policy framework with international best practices.

7. Following is the roadmap for developing an ecosystem for the management of Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) in Tamil Nadu.

- ❖ **Collaboration with stakeholders and development of traceability:** Identify and co-ordination with organizations, research institutions, Government Departments and the Private sector for implementing the project. Develop a system with key stakeholders for the traceability of fishing nets used on the shore of Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ **Awareness and Capacity Building:** Creating a people's movement by organizing Statewide awareness activities focused at coastal districts on marine litter, ocean-bound plastic and its impact on biodiversity. Awareness and training programme for fisher folk focused on the management of discarded fishing nets i.e. collection, cleaning, storage and recycling.
- ❖ **Infrastructure Provision:** Establish necessary infrastructure/ mechanism for ALDFG and other plastic debris along the coast and facilitate the recycling initiatives in the State by collaborating with the private sector.
- ❖ **Promote Alternative Livelihood:** Create incentives for the fishing community, women & youth groups, and self-help groups focused on enhancing the management and recycling of discarded fishing nets by innovative livelihood models.
- ❖ **Policy Framework for Discarded Fishing Net:** Enhanced private-public collaboration through developing the potential design of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programme for state-wide implementation.

8. TN Fishnet Initiative (TNFI) will be implemented by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board with a series of activities that will be devised to build an ecosystem for enabling the circular economy of discarded fishing nets. Key activities shall be as below:-

- ❖ Carry out the baseline study including shoreline survey at fishing villages and landing stations covering 14 coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. The surveys shall also include Mapping of all aggregators, recyclers and organizations involved in the management of discarded fishing nets.
- ❖ State-level workshop to be conducted on Marine Ecosystem and marine Plastic pollution for State-level and district-level officials. Capacity-building programs on alternate livelihood and skill development for fisher folk and community-based organizations shall be conducted.

- ❖ Coordinate with the Districts to organize the collection drives along with beach-clean-up activities on a quarterly basis. Standard operating procedures for proper management of plastic and marine plastic debris shall be provided to all Districts.
- ❖ Identification of locations and establishment of (pilot) collection centres focused on large-scale and small-scale fish landing centres across Tamil Nadu and mapping with recyclers shall be implemented within one year.
- ❖ Conducting training to fisherfolk on segregation (collection and cleaning) of marine-bound plastics, and channelizing them for recycling, with a special focus on fisherfolk women, Self-help groups and youth groups.
- ❖ Interaction with State level departments, District collectors, Corporations and Municipal Commissioners to implement the project.

9. The State Government proposes to focus on plans to implement the project and initiatives to protect biodiversity and avoid marine plastic debris:-

- ❖ Setting up a state-level Steering Committee to support the implementation of the "TN Fishnet Initiative (TNFI)". A technical cell shall be formed by TNPCB to implement the project and provide coordination support at the State, District and City. The technical cell shall produce a bi-annual report to the steering committee.
- ❖ District and City level Task forces for plastic waste management shall review the provisions of discarded nets and provide quarterly reports to TNPCB. Coastal Cities and villages having centers for plastic/waste management shall integrate with marine plastic debris and discarded nets.
- ❖ Implementing incentive structure for fisher folk to promote alternative livelihood by providing support through convergence with National and State Schemes.
- ❖ Development of design for extended producer responsibility (EPR) programme for Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG).
- ❖ Create a joint awareness programme with all key stakeholders on marine debris through people participation and social media outreach.
- ❖ Regular planning and review meetings to monitor the collection of discarded fishing nets.
- ❖ State-level Steering committee shall advise on scaling the "TN Fishnet Initiative (TNFI)" to all 14 Districts for all fishing communities in the State.

- ❖ Identifying international best practices for the business case with recycling of discarded fishing nets with support from the CES Marine Litter project with GIZ.

10. The Government accord administrative approval for the modalities mentioned above towards implementation of the "TN Fishnet Initiative (TNFI)". Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board shall fund the entire initiative.

11. The Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board is instructed to send a detailed proposal along with financial implications.

(BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR)

**SUPRIYA SAHU**  
**ADDITIONAL CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT**

To

The Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board,  
Chennai-32.

**Copy to:-**

The Member Secretary, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board,  
Chennai-32.

The Special/Senior Private Secretary to

Hon'ble Minister (Environment Climate Change), Chennai-9

The Private Secretary to Additional Chief Secretary to Government,

Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department, Chennai-9

Finance Department, Chennai-9

Stock File/Spare Copy.

//FORWARDED//BY ORDER//

*[Signature]*  
22/12/2023  
SECTION OFFICER

*[Signature]*  
22/12/23