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Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

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October 12, 2018

Mr Harsh Vardhan
Minister - Environment, Forest and Climate Change
3rd Floor, Prithvi Wing
Indira Parvayaran Bhawan
Jorbagh road, New Delhi - 110 003.

Mr CK Mishra
Secretary,
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
3rd Floor, Prithvi Wing
Indira Parvayaran Bhawan
Jorbagh road, New Delhi - 110 003.

Mr SP Singh Parihar
Chairman,
Central Pollution Control Board
Parivesh Bhavan,
East Arjun Nagar,
New Delhi - 110 032.

Dear Sir,

I write to you from Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), a 33 year old non-profit, non-political and professional organisation that works towards protecting citizens' rights in consumer, civic and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making.

This is with reference to news reports (attached herewith) of a memorandum submitted by the Tamil Nadu Environment Minister Mr. KC Karuppannan to Mr Harsh Vardhan, the Union Minister- Environment, Forests and Climate Change, on October 10, 2018, regarding assistance for development projects. This memorandum -among other things- seeks exemption from a second Public Hearing for certain projects for the award of Environmental Clearance.

Trustees

Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan (*Surgeon*)
Dr. George Thomas (*Orthopaedic Surgeon*)
Dr. R. Hema (*Associate Professor*)

Dr. C. Rammanohar Reddy (*Economist and Editor*)
Mr. Sriram Panchu (*Senior Advocate*)
Dr. Suchitra Ramkumar (*Doctor and Teacher*)
Mr. Keshav Desiraju (*IAS, Retd.*)

Advisors

Ms. Tara Murali (*Architect*)
Mr. N.L. Rajah (*Senior Advocate*)



It is unfortunate that the Government of Tamil Nadu has chosen to view the public hearing as an inconvenience that should be dispensed with, especially when the people have been vocal with their dissent. Rather than engaging the citizens to address their concerns, the state government wishes to circumvent the established participatory process, ironically for those it describes as 'public importance' infrastructure projects. It is also unfortunate that the state government has chosen to prioritise the 'losses faced by the investors' over the concerns raised by the people.

The EIA Notification 2006 envisages the Public Consultation Process as an integral and important component of the Environmental Clearance process and mandates engaging the public in projects that may affect them and their environment. It has laid down specific conditions to provide a free and fair platform for the public to voice their views about a proposed project. This has also been reinforced by judgments of the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court of India in the past. The state has been seeing robust and constructive participation of the people in the public consultation process for several projects, and it is unfair to label the dissenting voices as those with vested interests. It is of paramount importance to encourage these voices to be heard to achieve the ideals of democracy as laid out in the Constitution of our great Republic.

I therefore urge you to disregard the request of the Government of Tamil Nadu -which seeks to disregard the voice of the public- and instead strengthen mechanisms of public participation, which is the bedrock of any democracy. I request you to uphold the voice of the people on issues that concern them and are said to be undertaken for the sake of their development.

Thanking you!

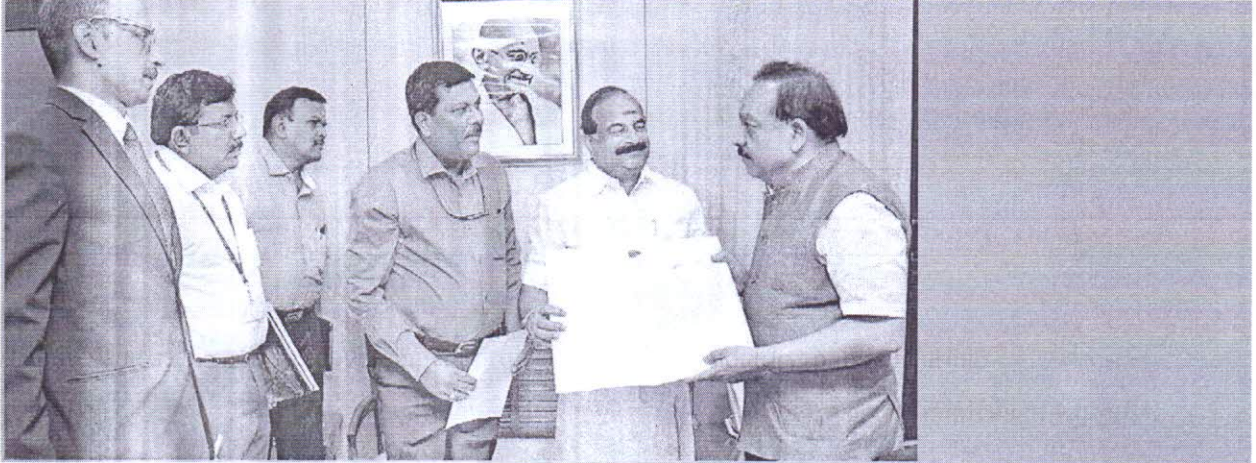
Om Prakash Singh
Executive Director

Tamil Nadu seeks nod for development projects without 'mandatory' public hearings

Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday sought a Central grant of `5,776 crore to implement various developmental projects.



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Minister K C Karuppannan along with senior bureaucrats submitting a memorandum to Union Environment Minister Harsha Vardhan in New Delhi on Tuesday | Express

By [SV Krishna Chaitanya](#)

Express News Service

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday sought a Central grant of Rs 5,776 crore to implement various developmental projects. It also sought special exemption from conducting 'mandatory' public hearings for certain projects of public importance. State environment minister KC Karuppannan along with senior bureaucrats met Union Minister Harsha Vardhan, who holds environment, science and technology portfolios, in New Delhi and submitted a detailed memorandum.

In a 14-page representation containing 13 requests seeking for in-principle clearance, the government said Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board was facing several difficulties for smooth conduct of public hearings, which are mandatory under Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, for certain type of projects.

“The public, NGOs, representatives of political parties with vested interest disturb the smooth proceedings of the hearing. In some cases, the hearing was stopped in the middle and meetings were

cancelled. In such cases, second time hearing was conducted with heavy police protection. Hence, some projects are getting delayed and for some projects permission could not be accorded. Due to this, investors faced heavy loss.

Therefore, it is requested that for public importance infrastructure projects implemented by the government like Common Effluent Treatment Plants, Common Municipal Solid Waste Management Facilities, Common Hazardous Waste Treatment Storage Facilities, Oil & Gas transportation pipe line projects, the Union environment ministry may consider for issue of environmental clearance without insisting for conducting public hearing once again," the memorandum reads.

Shambhu Kallolikar, TNPCB chairman and environment secretary, who accompanied the minister while submitting the memorandum told Express that the government did not ask blanket exemption. "As Tamil Nadu is becoming more urbanised and industrialised, the problem of managing solid and hazardous waste is becoming a huge challenge. So, we need to have more plants to treat the waste and can't wait for clearances to come," he said.

TN has 12 corporations, 124 municipalities, 528 town panchayats. The total generation of municipal solid waste from urban local bodies is 14,746 tonnes per day, of which Chennai alone generates 5,400 tonnes. To convert waste into energy, the government has requested Rs 3,500 crore grant to establish waste to energy plants as is being done in countries such as Japan and Singapore.

Meanwhile, the government has sought Rs 40 crore to increase the green cover in Chennai, industrial campuses and along national and State highways. A Udhayan, Director, Department of Environment, said a request was made to formally approve Coastal Zone Management Plan, besides approval for projects under Green Climate Fund.

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