

**Item No.11:**

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL  
SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI**

[Through Physical Hearing (Hybrid Option)]

**Original Application No.13 of 2025(SZ)**

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

Tribunal on its own motion - **SUO MOTU**  
based on the News item in The New Indian  
Express newspaper, Chennai e-edition  
dated 16.01.2025, titled, **"Experts are  
alarmed as 350 turtles was ashore dead till  
January 15"**.

Union of India,  
Represented by its Secretary,  
MOEF & CC, New Delhi and ors.



...Respondent(s)

**Date of hearing: 07.02.2025.**

**CORAM:**

**HON'BLE Smt. JUSTICE PUSHPA SATHYANARAYANA, JUDICIAL MEMBER**

**HON'BLE Dr. SATYAGOPAL KORLAPATI, EXPERT MEMBER**

For Applicant(s): Suo Motu.

For Respondent(s): Mr. Sai Srujan Tayi for R1.  
Dr. D. Shanmuganathan for R2, R5 & R6.  
Mr. S. Sai Sathya Jith for R3 & R4.  
Mr. Stanly Hebzon Singh represented  
Mrs. Madhuri Donti Reddy for R7 & R8.

## ORDER

**1.** Pursuant to our last order, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF)/Respondent No.6 has filed its report along with individual postmortem reports of the dead Olive Redly Sea Turtles.

**2.** It is disheartening to note that all the turtles that perished were adult females, confirming that they had moved towards the shore for breeding, as the official nesting season occurs from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> each year.

**3.** All the postmortem reports merely state that the carcasses were found stranded on Marina Beach. The morphological diagnosis mentions avulsion of the right eyeball, ascites, and hydropericardium—traumatic shock, which is typically associated with stranding.

**4.** In the report, the PCCF has provided a table detailing the number of sea turtles washed ashore from 17.01.2025 to 04.02.2025, which is an alarming number i.e. 671 in Chennai alone. However, the total number on the coast of Tamil Nadu is 792, as per the report. The above spike in the Olive Redly Sea Turtles mortality is unusual for the season along the Chennai coastline.

**5.** The PCCF's report further states that the enhanced surveillance along the coastal line, educating fishermen on marine conservation laws, protection of endangered species, strict legal enforcement to defer illegal fishing practices, etc. The PCCF has also recommended

utilizing GPS tracking and drone surveillance for better monitoring of illegal fishing activity and also recommended for conservation of sea turtles.

**6.** The Department of Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare (5<sup>th</sup> Respondent), despite being aware of G.O. (Ms.) No.146 (Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department) dated 27.09.2016 and G.O. (Ms.) No.62 dated 10.03.2017, which prohibits mechanized fishing vessels, motorized country crafts with engine capacity of more than 10 HP and usage of 'ray fish nets' by the motorized country crafts and using the mechanized fishing techniques in a radius of 5 NM around the potential nesting and breeding sites of sea turtles identified by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), has failed to prevent the fishermen from operating trawler boats in the prohibited area during the turtle breeding season.

**7.** The said G.O. (Ms.) No.146 dated 27.09.2016 specifically prohibits mechanized fishing techniques from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> of every year, particularly in the stretches between Napier Bridge to Tiruvanmiyur and Kottivakkam to Kovalam Beach. Notably, these are the two areas where mass sea turtle mortality has been reported since January 16, 2025.

**8.** Admittedly, in Chennai, 14 boats were found in contravention of the TNMRF Act and 84 mechanized boats were found within the prohibited distance of 5 NM.

**9.** The Fisheries Department's report states that 193 charge sheets have been filed against the erring fishermen using the said boats, in which, 68 Nos. have been filed in Chennai district alone. Additionally, 30 boats have been impounded until the adjudicating officer's proceedings are completed, and the fuel subsidy has been stopped for all 172 fishing boats. The Fisheries Department is also said to have GPS monitoring of fishing boats within the 5 NM to effectively keep track of the movement of the fishing vessels.

**10.** Regarding the usage of Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) in trawler nets, it is stated that pursuant to the direction of the Hon'ble High Court of Madras in W.P. No.1499 of 2015, the Tamil Nadu Marine Fisheries Regulation Rules, 2020 were amended to include Sub-Sections 5 and 6 in Section 17, regulating fishing gear to prohibit mechanized trawling boats from operating without a TED in cod end.

**11.** Despite the existing regulations, no convincing reason has been provided for allowing trawlers to operate within the prohibited 5 NM radius. Even after the issue was brought to their knowledge and taken up *Suo Motu* by this Tribunal, the Fisheries Department should have stopped the trawlers during the breeding/nesting season which would have reduced the number of sea turtle mortality.

**12.** In the meanwhile, when it was alleged that the carcasses of Olive Redly Sea turtles floated only from the coast of Andhra Pradesh, the Fisheries Department and the PCCF of the State Andhra Pradesh were *Suo Motu*

impleaded as additional Respondents No.7 and 8 respectively and were directed to file their reports.

**13.** Pursuant to the same, the Fisheries Department and the PCCF of the State of Andhra Pradesh have filed their respective reports dated 06.02.2025.

**14.** Even in the State of Andhra Pradesh, a similar G.O. (Ms.) No.114 dated 08.09.2001 is in force, which specifically prohibits those trawlers who are engaged in fishing without TED. Violations result in the confiscation of the entire catch and a fine of Rs.2,500/-. The report specifies that there are no mechanized fishing boats after the Nizampatnam Fishing Harbour, which is 400 Km away from the Tamil Nadu coast.

**15.** The present actions taken by the State of Tamil Nadu and the penalties imposed on violators will not effectively prevent them from entering into the sea unless strict vigilance is maintained. Once the number of Olive Redly Sea Turtle deaths was increasing, the Fisheries Department should have stopped the mechanized boats with trawler nets entering the sea within 5 NM. However, there should not be any future incidents of this nature for the next nesting season.

**16.** Therefore, we direct the Fisheries Department of the State of Tamil Nadu to follow the Andhra Pradesh model by confiscating the catch and imposing fines on violators, who are getting into the sea during the prohibited season.

**17.** The report of the Fisheries Department, State of Tamil Nadu says only the FIR being filed and a few boats impounded. So, let a further report be filed detailing the actions taken against those fishermen to ensure that they may not repeat the same offence in future.

**18.** The indulgence of the Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu is expected in this regard to give appropriate directions to the Fisheries Department.

**19.** Post the matter on **18.03.2025** for further consideration.



Sd/-

**Smt. Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana, JM**

Sd/-

**Dr. Satyagopal Korlapati, EM**

O.A. No.13/2025(SZ)  
07<sup>th</sup> February, 2025. Mn.