

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter No.7591/MMA1/2021, Dated 13.6.2021 of Thiru M.K. Stalin, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India regarding invitation for bids notified by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for extraction of Hydrocarbon in Vadatheru Block of Cauvery Basin:

The Cauvery Basin, as you are well aware, is the bedrock of Tamil Nadu's food security and agro based economy from time immemorial. This ecologically fragile zone supports the livelihood of millions of farmers and farm workers.

In this context, projects to extract hydrocarbons from the Cauvery basin have faced unanimous strident opposition from all stakeholders. The Government of Tamil Nadu has consistently opposed hydrocarbon exploration and extraction projects in the Cauvery basin and neighboring districts, given the pivotal role played by the region in the agrarian economy.

It is learnt that the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has invited bids for development of Oil and Gas fields at Vadatheru in Pudukkottai district in the Cauvery basin on 10.06.2021. The identified area for auction falls in the Cauvery basin and also in the Protected Agricultural Zone declared by the State Government, under the Tamil Nadu Protected Agricultural Zone Development Act, 2020. This legislation prohibits any new exploration, drilling and extraction of Oil and Natural Gas and other similar hydrocarbons from the Protected Agricultural Zone.

It is unfortunate that the sentiments of the people, the probable ecological impact and the legal enactments by Government of Tamil Nadu

have not been taken into account by the relevant authorities. The calling of bids by Government of India has already ignited public agitation in Pudukkottai and neighboring districts apprehending the adverse consequences of hydrocarbon extraction in this agrarian region.

My Government is of the firm view that no new hydrocarbon projects should be taken up in the Cauvery basin and neighboring districts in the interest of protecting the livelihoods of the farmers and fragile agro-ecology of the Cauvery basin. Moreover, any such proposal for new extraction in the Protected Agricultural Zone is in violation of the Tamil Nadu Protected Agricultural Zone Development Act, 2020.

In these circumstances, I urge you to immediately intervene and instruct the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to cancel the bid process for Vadatheru in Cauvery Basin. I also request you to instruct the Ministry to consult the State Government *ab initio* before bringing any area in Tamil Nadu for any auctions in future for hydrocarbon exploration and extraction.

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