

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 20.1.2020 of **Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Prakash Javadekar**, Hon'ble Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, New Delhi.

I wish to bring to your kind notice that the Ministry of Environment and Forests, under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 has published the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 vide number S.O.1533 (E), dated the 14th September, 2006, mandating prior environmental clearance for certain category of projects, of which Off-shore and On-shore oil and gas exploration, development & production project was categorised under "Category A".

The Ministry have now issued an amendment to the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, for exploration drilling in respect of on-shore and off-shore oil and gas, vide notification dated 16.1.2020 stating that, "All projects in respect of off-shore and on-shore **oil and gas development and production** except exploration are categorised under **category A**" and "All project in respect of off-shore and on-shore oil and gas **exploration** are categorized as '**B2** projects". As per the said EIA Notification, B2 projects shall not require public consultation.

I had written to the Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India vide letter dated 30.3.2017, highlighting the strong opposition to Hydrocarbon extraction projects in the delta area; the imperative need for adequate consultation with stakeholders and to ensure that the interest of farmers are fully safeguarded.

I would like to bring to your kind notice that projects involving exploration and extraction of Hydrocarbons have faced strong resistance from farmers/activists and other stakeholders in Tamil Nadu. Since most of these projects are situated in the Cauvery delta districts, which is ecologically a fragile zone, but a very fertile region and rice bowl of the State, the opposition to these projects has been emotive and intense. Therefore, it is very essential to take the people and all stakeholders along, while implementing these projects, so that their co-operation and involvement is ensured. The present notification goes against this spirit.

I would also like to inform that before the issue of Notification dated 16.1.2020, no draft notification was circulated as mandated and no opportunity was given to the stakeholders and to the State Government to offer our views.

Considering these facts, I request that status quo ante may be maintained for Cauvery delta region, as it is an ecologically sensitive zone and necessary amendment may be issued to restore the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 vide number S.O.1533 (E), dated the 14th September, 2006, mandating prior Environmental Clearance & Public Consultation for "Off-shore and On-shore oil and gas exploration, development & production projects" and categorise them under "Category A" for Cauvery Delta area.

Issued by: Director, Information and Public Relations, Chennai-9.