

To,

Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Government of Tamil Nadu
Email: hfsec@tn.gov.in

Hon'ble Minister, Health & Family Welfare Government of Tamil Nadu
Email: minister_health@tn.gov.in

The District Collector, Chennai
Fourth Floor, No.62, Rajaji Salai, George Town Chennai 600001
Email: collrchn@tn.gov.in

The Member Secretary
Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board 76, Mount Salai. Guindy
Chennai 600015
Email: tnpcb-chn@gov.in

District Environmental Engineer Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board Ambattur, Chennai
Email: deeambattur@gmail.com

The Principal Secretary (Environment and Forests Department) Government of Tamilnadu
Secretariat, Chennai 600009
Email: forsec@tn.gov.in

Copy To:

Chief Minister's Cell Email: cmcell@tn.gov.in

Date: 03/01/2022

Subject: Omicron Alert; Covid Surge in Tamilnadu - Request to Postpone Public Hearing for Ennore Thermal Power Station (Expansion), Ernavoor, Chennai district -- January 06th 2022.

Respected Sir/Madam,

The public hearing for the 660MW Ennore Thermal Power Station (Expansion) is scheduled for 6 January 2022 in Ernavoor. The highly controversial and polluting project which is set to come up in an already over-polluted region has triggered sharp criticism from local residents and political parties who have indicated that they will attend the hearing in large numbers and oppose the project.

At the time of notification of the public hearing, COVID cases were on the decline and a large gathering with precautions was conceivable. However, the rising cases of COVID over the last week have prompted the Government to rightly announce restrictions on public gatherings. We understand that local residents, including children, youth and the elderly – all of whom are at-risk either because of age or because they are unvaccinated – intend to attend the public hearing in large numbers and oppose the project on grounds that it will make a bad pollution situation worse. However, considering the surge in COVID and the restrictions on public gatherings, it will

not be possible for them to attend the public hearing, thereby robbing them of a statutory opportunity to participate in environmental decision-making concerning their lives.

This would be contrary to the EIA Notification, 2006, which intends a public hearing to foster widespread public participation. Even without the at-risk population, public turnout at the public hearing can be expected to be in large numbers, turning the hearing into a potential super-spreaders event.

Online hearings too cannot be an option especially given that the hearing is about a project that is to come up in a predominantly working-class region where many of the affected persons may not have access to smartphones or the ability to express themselves through the hostile online medium.

Under the circumstances, we do not see how the public hearing can be conducted without excluding stakeholders, endangering public health, and potentially prolonging the impact of COVID through harsher lockdowns.

We request you to kindly postpone the public hearing until such time that it is safe for larger congregations.

Sincerely,



Dr. Vishvaja Sambath, BDS, MPH (JIPMER), Healthy Energy Initiative, #92, 3rd cross street, Thiruvalluvar Nagar, Besant Nagar, Chennai - 90.

Dr. Nandini K Kumar. Retd. Deputy Director-General, Indian Council for Medical Research. Vice-President, Forum for Ethics Review Committees in India. Chennai.

Dr. Manikanda Nesan, MBBS, MD Preventive and Social Medicine, Chennai.

Dr. Sudharshini, MBBS, MD Community Medicine, Chennai.

Dr. Gayathri S, MBBS, MD Preventive and Social Medicine, Chennai.

Dr. S. Nandini, MBBS, Chennai.