

Mettur-Cuddalore Anti-PVC Factory March Committee C/o H19/4 Gangai Street, Kalakshetra Colony, Chennai 600 090

Mettur Cuddalore Villagers March to Expose Chemplast Pollution

SALEM. 5 September, 2005 – More than 50 villagers from Mettur and SIPCOT Cuddalore launched an 8-day march from Salem to Cuddalore town to highlight Chemplast Sanmar's pollution in Mettur, and to rally support for SIPCOT residents' opposition to Chemplast's proposal to set up a PVC factory in Cuddalore. The march will end on 13 September, when SIPCOT villagers are expected to join the caravan en masse and walk from SIPCOT Cuddalore to Cuddalore town hall for a concluding meeting-cum-press briefing.

SIPCOT and Mettur villagers have resolved to prevent the setting up of Chemplast Sanmar's PVC factory in Cuddalore. In 2002, Cuddalore villagers had rejected Chemplast's proposal at a Government-held public hearing. Subsequently, the company relocated the proposal to Krishnapatnam, Andhra Pradesh upon the invitation of then Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. Despite Naidu's guarantee, Krishnapatnam villagers successfully blocked the proposal. In early 2005, the Tamilnadu Government secretly gave a No Objection Certificate to Chemplast. On 30 August, the Union environment Ministry considered the proposal. Their decision is awaited.

PVC is a poison plastic whose production, usage and disposal are associated with the release of deadly environmental poisons such as dioxins, furans and phthalates. "It is not possible to manufacture PVC without polluting the environment or harming workers. Such a deadly product in the hands of a company with a proven record of pollution and disdain for people's well-being is a recipe for disaster. We have suffered Chemplast's pollution for 50 years. We don't want our friends in Cuddalore or anywhere else to unwittingly permit Chemplast to set up a factory in their area and suffer like we have done," according to a statement by West Konur Farmers Association.

Both Mettur and SIPCOT Cuddalore are reeling from the effects of pollution by existing industries. Agencies such as the State Human Rights Commission and the Indian People's Tribunal have recommended against the setting up of any more polluting units in Cuddalore. But the Government has turned a deaf ear to these recommendations.

Earlier plans to begin the march in Mettur on 3 September had to be changed in the eleventh hour because the Mettur Deputy Superintendent of Police refused permission, not just for Mettur but for the entire Salem district. However, the Madras High Court has struck down the Mettur order in part, and asked the organisers to continue with the march from Salem where permission has already been sought and obtained. The West Konur Farmers Welfare Association says the Mettur police routinely uses its authority to prevent people from expressing their problems with Chemplast's pollution.

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Supporting Organisations: West Konur Farmers Welfare Association, SIPCOT Area Community Environmental Monitoring, Thanthai Periyar Dravida Kazhagam, SEED, Corporate Accountability Desk, FEDCOT, Tamilnadu Environment Council, Tamilnadu Green Movement