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சட்டமன்ற உறுப்பினர்

தி.மு.க. சட்டமன்ற கொற்றா

கடலூர்.



8, காண்வென்ட் தெரு,

புதுப்பாளையம், கடலூர் - 607 01

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To

Hon'ble

Thiru. A. Raja

Minister of Environment & Forests

R No. 423, Paryavaran Bhavan,

CGO Complex

Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003

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Dear Thiru. Raja:

Greetings to you from Cuddalore. I wish to register my objections to the proposed PVC factory to be set up by M/s Chemplast Sanmar Ltd. The project is currently under review by the reconstituted Expert Committee (Industry) at the Ministry of Environment. I have been approached by members of my constituency, and am myself convinced that this project presents an unmanageable threat to the environment and safety of SIPCOT residents. Further, the project has been hurried through without requiring the submission of detailed project documents and without considering the significant incremental pollution load that the new proposal will place on SIPCOT's already over-polluted environment.

I was alarmed to note that the Department of Environment, Government of Tamilnadu, had secretly issued NOC to the project and forwarded it to your ministry for approval despite the massive opposition to the project, and several resolutions at panchayat, panchayat union and Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly affirming that no further polluting industries would be set up in SIPCOT, Cuddalore.

The reasons for my objecting to the setting up of PVC factory in SIPCOT, Cuddalore, are based on scientific data relating to the lifecycle of PVC plastic, first-hand experience of the sufferings of pollution-impacted communities in SIPCOT, and Chemplast Sanmar's track record in Mettur Dam where it operates a PVC factory.

Permitting the factory to set up in SIPCOT will be disrespectful of the ongoing human sufferings of the pollution-impacted communities in Mettur and Cuddalore.

About Cuddalore

The lands for SIPCOT Cuddalore were identified and the project conceived in the 1970s under the chief ministership of Hon'ble Thalaivar Dr. Kalaignar. At the time, the estate was not meant to host chemical or polluting industries, especially given the abundant sub-surface freshwater and the rich agriculture in the areas adjacent to SIPCOT. Till date, despite an application of the SIPCOT Industries Association in 1997 seeking notification of the estate as a chemical industry zone, such notification has not been issued.

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The industrial estate began operation in 1984. Since then, residents of SIPCOT Cuddalore have been complaining of pollution. Their land, water and air have been poisoned by the toxics and poisons from the chemical units located in the region. The human health in this region has been severely compromised due to industrial pollution. Pollution has affected children's mental, physical and sexual development, according to mothers living in SIPCOT.

Numerous agencies have studied SIPCOT's pollution and related effects on humans and environment, and given recommendations:

- 1998: Tamilnadu State Human Rights Commission recommends against the setting up of any more polluting industries in SIPCOT. Justice (Retd) Nainar Sundaram of the SHRC writes that public health in SIPCOT "cannot take more burden than that which has already ensued by the existing chemical industries."
- 1999: The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute finds widespread groundwater contamination due to industrial pollution in SIPCOT. Prompted by the pollution due to the existing industries, NEERI recommends that a Regional EIA be conducted before commissioning Phase II of the industrial estate. No such study has been carried out.
- 1999: Semmankuppam Panchayat, where the proposed PVC factory is set to come up, issues a resolution against the setting up of polluting or water-intensive industries.
2003: The Indian People's Tribunal on Environment & Human Rights headed by Justice (Retd) J. Kanakaraj of the Madras High Court echoes the State Human Rights Commission's recommendations and specifically cautions against the setting up of Chemplast Sanmar's PVC factory in SIPCOT, Cuddalore.
- DATE: The Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution against the setting up of polluting industries in SIPCOT, Cuddalore.
2004: Alarmed at the high levels of diverse toxic gases found in SIPCOT's ambient air by the SIPCOT Area Community Environmental Monitors, the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee on Hazardous Wastes directs the Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board to bring pollutants within norms or close all industries.
2005: As recently as on 07.09.2005, the Cuddalore district Panchayat Union issued a resolution against the setting up of polluting factories in SIPCOT, Cuddalore.

Dangers of PVC

Poly vinyl chloride or PVC is known as the "Poison Plastic." Its production, usage and disposal are associated with the release of dangerous toxic chemicals, including carcinogens such as vinyl chloride monomer (VCM), ethylene dichloride (EDC), dioxins and furans. Besides cancer, these chemicals are implicated in causing serious disorders including birth defects, falling sperm counts, infertility, immune system dysfunction and reproductive disorders.

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You may recall that four years ago, the Tamilnadu Government ran an aggressive campaign highlighting the dangers of PVC plastic.

Considering its toxicity, numerous countries such as Sweden, Germany, Denmark and regional governments including the European Union have placed a variety of restrictions on PVC products and wastes. Indeed, the PVC industry in industrialised countries is stagnating even as the toxic industry seeks to expand in poorer countries like India and China. It must be highlighted that there are far more environmentally friendly and safer alternatives for virtually every PVC application.

VCM, one of the raw materials for PVC manufacture, is known to cause liver dysfunction and cancer of the liver, particularly among workers.

PVC production and disposal are identified as a significant source of the global load of Persistent Organic Pollutants – a class of highly toxic chemicals including dioxins and furans. India is a party to the United Nations Environment Program-led Stockholm Convention that is aimed at reducing and eliminating all anthropogenic releases of Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Chemplast Sanmar's Track Record

Ten people, including farmers and affected people, from Mettur dam visited Cuddalore on 12-13 September, 2005, to highlight their sufferings as a result of their proximity to Chemplast Sanmar's polluting factories in Mettur. Besides hearing their testimonies and seeing photographs brought by them, I was also able to go through the Indian People's Tribunal report on Chemplast Sanmar and Malco's alleged environmental violations in Mettur.

The evidence at hand implicates Chemplast's chemical factories in a range of environmental violations, including burial of dioxin- and mercury-contaminated toxic wastes, contamination of groundwater, laying waste more than 5000 acres of agricultural land and causing health problems among workers and residents.

The Indian People's Tribunal report also notes that Chemplast's PVC factory discharges highly toxic effluents directly into the River Kaveri. According to one scientific study, the effluents contain high levels of cancer-causing chemicals such as VCM, EDC, chloroform and carbon tetrachloride.

Available evidence indicates that the company takes a casual approach to environment and worker safety.

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Chemplast's proposed PVC project

The PVC project under discussion is not a new project. In 2002, SIPCOT residents, environmental groups and political parties rejected the proposal at a Government-held public hearing. Simultaneously, the residents also successfully petitioned the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank group to reject Chemplast's loan application for the PVC project.

In 2003, the project proposal relocated to Krishnapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Villagers from Krishnapatnam visited Mettur dam and saw for themselves the sufferings of the villagers there. As a result, the local communities and all political parties in Krishnapatnam unanimously rejected the project on grounds, and the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board did not clear the project. Now, with nowhere left to turn, the project has made a come-back to Cuddalore with a few cosmetic changes.

1. Instead of an incinerator to dispose VCM, the plant will install a vent gas scrubber.
2. Rather than draw groundwater, the company proposes to secure 2,800 cubic metres of water a day by installing a desalination plant. However, the company also proposes to sink borewells to ensure availability of 2,800 cu. m of water for contingencies.
3. All wastes, including desalination rejects and trade effluents, will be discharged to sea.

My concerns are two-fold. First, the objections raised against the PVC project (See "Evaluation of Chemplast EIA by Dr. Mark Chernaik, ELAW-US) cover a range of issues including provision of false information by the project proponent. The technical review commissioned by the TNPCB covers only two aspects, namely groundwater drawal and VCM incineration.

Running a desalination plant is energy-intensive. Further, the efficiency and pollution potential of desalination plants depend on the technology used. It is unfortunate that the Tamilnadu Government has cleared the project without requiring the project proponent to indicate the quantum and source of electricity for the desalination plant or the technology that is sought to be deployed.

Second, in the five years since this project was first mooted, much has changed both with the project and the area where it is set to come up.

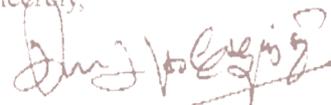
- The project includes plans for a marine terminal and pipeline to transfer carcinogenic and explosive Vinyl Chloride. What could be the potential fallout from such a project in the event of a Tsunami or abnormally rough waves?
- A 2,800 cubic metre desalination plant is not a small unit. To put it in perspective, the controversial Coca Cola plant in Plachimada has a requirement of 1500 cubic metres of water per day. The quantity of rejects generated would be substantial. The rejects are not only highly saline, but also higher in temperature than the sea water that they are discharged to.

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- The proponents also plan to sink borewells to draw 2800 cubic metres of water for contingencies. Given the high cost of desalination units, economics will dictate that borewell water, rather than the desalinated water is used for the process requirements. This will lead to further depletion of groundwater and impacts on agriculture and the drinking water needs of future generations.
- Chemplast proposes to store and handle highly explosive and volatile chemicals such as Vinyl Chloride. Given this, its location adjacent to Pandian Chemicals -- a manufacturer of highly explosive rocket fuel Ammonium Perchlorate — poses a Bhopal-like hazard to residents who live barely 200 metres away.

Cuddalore has a significant fishing community that is dependent on the sea for a living. Any increased discharge of chemical effluents into the sea will be detrimental to the fisherfolk. In light of all the above evidences and concerns, and the massive public opposition to the project, I request you to reject clearance for Chemplast Sanmar's PVC project in SIPCOT, Cuddalore, and also assist us by preventing the setting up of any further polluting industries in SIPCOT.

Sincerely,



Ela. Pugazhendi

Member of Legislative Assembly - Cuddalore

Encl: Evaluation of Environmental &
Social Impact Assessment Report for the Proposed PVC
Project at Cuddalore, Tamilnadu by Dr. Mark Chernaik, ELAW-US

Copy to :

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2. **Shri. R. Ramachandran**
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4. **Suri. Gagandeep Singh Bedi**
District Collector, Cuddalore I.
5. **Shri. M. Nizamudeen**
General Secretary, Federation of Consumer Organisations - Tamilnadu & Pondicherry (FEDCOT),
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