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## Disconnect power to illegal buildings: HC

CHENNAI: The Madras High Court has directed the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) to disconnect power supply to the unauthorised commercial buildings including resorts found in forest.

A division Bench comprising Justice S J Mukhopadhaya (since elevated as Chief Justice and posted to the Gujarat High Court) and Justice M Duraiswamy gave the direction while passing further interim orders on the writ petitions from 'In Defence of Environment & Animals', by its managing trustee Elephant G Rajendran, Mudumalai Pazhangudiyinar Nala Sangam and the Tamil Nadu Vivasaya Sangam, on December 3 last.

The Bench also reiterated its earlier order passed on December 1 this year, directing the Nilgiris District Collector to remove all the unauthorised constructions in private lands, private forest lands, government lands and government forest lands. The Bench directed the State to decide within a month, as to which elephant corridor had to be selected, whether the one identified by the Centre in its letter dated August 11, 2006, or the proposed corridor as identified by the Expert Committee.

The publication of such elephant corridor map should be made by the State in two local newspapers giving the details of survey number of private lands that were falling within the proposed corridor.

The intimation of such proposed elephant corridor along with a copy of the report of the Expert Committee should also be forwarded to each local panchayats, which fell within the proposed corridor. The proposed corridor including the map containing the different survey numbers should be finalised within six months, Bench said.

On such finalisation, it would be open for the State to decide whether the private lands that were falling within the elephant corridor, did not belong to scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers, who had a right under the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act and whether such lands should be acquired. If a decision was taken to acquire the lands, they would follow the regular procedures as laid down under the Land Acquisition Act.

If the government, in the meantime, wanted to take over the management of the private forest, it might do so in terms of Sec 3 of the TN Private Forests (Assumption of Management) Act so as to enable the elephants to pass through the corridor without any hindrance till the lands were acquired, the Bench added.

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