

**BILLS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF THE STATE OF TAMIL NADU**

Under Rule 130 of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Rules, the following Bill which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Tamil Nadu on 24th January, 2026 is published together with Statement of Objects and Reasons for general information:-

L.A.Bill No. 6 of 2026

A Bill to provide for regulation, management and augmentation of water resources through participatory governance, to achieve equity, efficiency and sustainability in the use of water resources in the State of Tamil Nadu and to establish an institutional framework for the purpose and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

BE it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Tamil Nadu in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

PART - I.

CHAPTER - I.

PRELIMINARY.

Short title, extent and commencement.

1. (1) This Act may be called the Tamil Nadu Water Resources (Regulation, Management and Augmentation) Act, 2026.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Tamil Nadu.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification, appoint.

Definitions.

2. (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “abstraction” means the process of extraction or drawal of water from well or from any water resources;

(b) “adjudicating officer” means the officer appointed under sub-section (1) of section 31;

(c) “appellate authority” means the authority notified under sub-section (1) of section 19;

(d) “appellate officer” means the officer notified under sub-section (1) of section 32;

(e) “appropriate quality” means quality of water which is in compliance with all applicable standards that are binding under any law in force at the time;

(f) “aquifer” means a geological formation, group of formations or part of a formation that is sufficiently porous and permeable to yield a significant quantity of water to a well or spring;

(g) "authorisation" refers to any approval, clearance, licence, no objection certificate, permission or exemption, by whatever name called, granted under this Act;

(h) "Authority" means the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Authority established under sub-section (1) of section 5;

(i) "basin" means a geographical area determined by the watershed limit of a system of waters, which flow into the ocean or sea either directly or through another State, or into a natural lake or depression with no outlet;

(j) "commercial water user" means any person or entity, including but not limited to industries, infrastructure providers and mining operations that abstracts, draws, transport or transfer bulk water or utilises water for business or trade to generate revenue or profit;

(k) "Committee" means the District Water Resources Committee constituted under sub- section (1) of section 12;

(l) "domestic purpose" means the drawal or abstraction of water for residential purposes such as drinking, cooking, bathing, washing, sanitary or rearing domestic livestock, but not for any commercial purpose;

(m) "essential principles" refers to the essential principles set out in section 3;

(n) "floodplain" means the lowlands and relatively flat areas including the water channels, adjoining a river or any other water body, that are subject to flooding from that river or water body at specified times and frequencies;

(o) "floodplain Zone" means the area notified under section 23;

(p) "Government" means the State Government;

(q) "groundwater" means water occurring in its natural state where it exists below the surface in the zone of saturation, such that it can be extracted through wells or by any other means or which emerges as springs and base flows in streams and rivers;

(r) "groundwater Protection Zone" means the area notified under section 21;

(s) "Implementing Authority" means the officer or authority designated under sub-section (1) of section 14;

(t) "pollution" shall have the same meaning assigned to it in clause (e) of section 2 of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;

(u) "precautionary principle" refers to an approach that advocates the adoption of anticipatory, preventive or mitigating cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, irrespective of the lack of full scientific certainty regarding such threats;

(v) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(w) "preventive action" refers to action taken to preclude injury to, or adverse effects on persons, property, the environment or the ecological system;

(x) "rainwater harvesting" means the technique or system of collection and storage of rainwater, at the micro-watershed scale, including roof-top harvesting for future use or for the recharge of groundwater;

(y) "recharge" means natural or artificial replenishment of groundwater;

(z) "river" means a natural water course arising naturally to carry excess rainwater from its catchment to water bodies such as oceans, lakes and seas;

(za) "river basin" means the area drained by a river and its tributaries including associated aquifers, such that all the precipitation or runoff that occurs within such area, except for evaporation, eventually finds its way to a river, its tributaries or associate aquifers;

(zb) "river Conservation Zone" means the area notified under section 24;

(zc) "sink" with all its grammatical variations and cognate expressions in relation to an existing well or new well includes digging, drilling or boring of new well and deepening of the existing well, for abstraction of groundwater;

(zd) "spring" means a natural point where groundwater emerges and flows out onto the surface of the earth, driven by underground pressure;

(ze) "State" means the State of Tamil Nadu;

(zf) "sub-basin" means the catchment area of the tributary of a river;

(zg) "surface water" means and includes all natural and artificial inland water such as rivers, watercourses, lakes, floodplains, wetlands, inlets, canals, pools, ponds and reservoirs existing within the territory of the State;

(zh) "sustainability", in the context of the availability and use of water, means using water in a way that meets current ecological, social, and economic needs without compromising the ability to meet those needs in the future;

(zi) “transfer of bulk water” refers to the transfer of raw or treated potable water in bulk through vehicles, open channels, pipelines or a combination of these from a source to an area lacking a local water source, whether for domestic, infrastructure or industrial use in rural or urban area, irrespective of the time frame for such transfer;

(zj) “treated wastewater” means water generated from the treatment of sewage, sullage and effluents;

(zk) “water” means surface water and groundwater;

(zl) “water bodies” means all water storage and conveyance systems including ponds, tanks, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, canals, channels and streams either occurring naturally or created artificially;

(zm) “water budget” refers to the hydrological tool used to quantify the flow of water in and out of a system. It is an accounting of all water stored and exchanged on the land surface (rivers, lakes), subsurface (aquifer, groundwater) and atmosphere (precipitation, evaporation);

(zn) “water for life” means the basic quantity of water of appropriate quality required by each human being for drinking, cooking, bathing, sanitation, personal hygiene and related personal or domestic uses with an additional requirement for women for their special needs and includes water required for domestic livestock or for wildlife, where ‘water for wildlife’ refers to water required to prevent human-wildlife conflict arising in relation to water scarcity;

(zo) “water resources” refers to surface waters, groundwater, estuaries, aquifers, rivers, springs, natural channels in which water flows regularly or intermittently, wetlands, lakes, ponds or reservoirs into which or from which water flows and any other collection of water which the Government may, by notification, declare to be a water resource;

(zp) “water resources management” refers to the process of coordinated regulation and management of water, land and related resources to maximise economic and social welfare equitably without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems and the environment;

(zq) “water resources management plans” refers to the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan and the District Water Resources Management Plan published under sections 26 and 27, respectively;

(zr) “water resources project” refers to existing or proposed single or multi-purpose plans or systems in the areas of agriculture, drinking water, hydropower, flood prevention and management, sanitation, storage, water treatment or any other area of water use or management, whether owned or managed by a governmental or non-governmental entity;

(zs) “water security” means securing and safeguarding the sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality of water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters and for preserving ecosystems;

(zt) “watershed” means the ridge or line of high land separating two areas such that rainwater falling on one side of the line drains on that side and cannot pass to the other side, and by extension, the area bounded by the ridge, generally used to denote a small local area bounded by low ridges, but sometimes also a large area bounded by high hills;

(zu) “water user” means any person or organisation who abstracts or draws or transports water for agriculture, horticulture, domestic, commercial or industrial purposes or any other purpose from any water resources whether chargeable or non-chargeable;

(zv) “well” means any structure sunk for the search or extraction of groundwater, including open wells, dug wells, bore wells, dug-cum-bore wells, tube wells, filter points, collector wells, infiltration galleries, recharge wells, disposal wells or any of their combinations or variations but does not include well sunk for scientific research purposes.

CHAPTER - II.

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.

Essential principles
of water resources
management.

3. (1) The water resources and other related resources of this State shall be regulated, managed and augmented in accordance with the following essential principles, namely:—

(a) water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment;

(b) the regulation, management and augmentation of water resources shall be based on a participatory approach, involving water users, planners and policymakers, at all levels;

(c) water has an economic value in all its competing uses and shall be recognised as an economic good;

(d) all water resources are common pool resources;

(e) the use of water resources shall be prioritised in the order of water for life, water for food security, water for sustainable livelihoods and water for ecosystem needs;

(f) water resource management shall be based on social equality, economic viability and ecological sustainability;

(g) the preventive action principle;

(h) the precautionary principle.

(2) The essential principles shall—

(a) guide the Authority, Committee and Implementing Authorities in the exercise of their powers and performance of their functions relating to water resources;

(b) form the basis for the formulation of all plans relating to water resources management in the State;

(c) form the basis for all the decisions to grant or refuse to grant authorisations to activities that involve the abstraction or transportation or use of water resources or that otherwise have an impact on water resources or related ecosystems;

(d) play a role in determining whether tariff should be levied for the abstraction or use of water resources and if so, the quantum thereof;

(e) be reflected in making rules and regulations under this Act;

(f) be applied to resolve grievances or disputes relating to water resources.

4. No person shall be denied access to, or the use of, water resources, on the grounds only of caste, religion, community, ethnicity, class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, place of residence, or any of them. Prohibition against discrimination.

CHAPTER – III.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STATE WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.

5. (1) The Government shall, by notification, establish an Authority, to be called the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Authority, to regulate, manage and augment the water resources in the State. Establishment of the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Authority.

(2) The Authority established under sub-section (1) shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal and empowered to carry on all things necessary for the purposes of this Act.

(3) The Authority shall consist of the following members, namely:—

(a) Chief Secretary to Government, who shall be the Chairperson, *ex-officio*;

(b) Secretary to Government, in charge of Finance, *ex-officio*;

(c) Secretary to Government, in charge of Municipal Administration and Water Supply, *ex-officio*;

(d) Secretary to Government, in charge of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, *ex-officio*;

(e) Secretary to Government, in charge of Industries, Investment Promotion and Commerce, *ex-officio*;

(f) Secretary to Government, in charge of Environment, Climate Change and Forests, *ex-officio*;

(g) Secretary to Government, in charge of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, *ex-officio*;

(h) Secretary to Government, in charge of Tourism, Culture and Religious Endowments Department, *ex-officio*;

(i) Secretary to Government, in charge of Water Resources, who shall be the Member Secretary, *ex-officio*;

(j) three eminent experts in the field of water resources or related fields, to be nominated by the Government.

(4) The Authority may co-opt not more than three members as it may deem fit, in such manner and subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.

(5) The Authority may invite such number of persons having expertise in the field of water resources management or persons of eminence or high repute as deemed fit, to attend any of the meetings of the Authority as special invitees. The special invitees shall take part in the discussion but shall not have the right to vote.

(6) The nominated members and special invitees to the meeting of the authority shall be paid such fees and allowances as may be prescribed.

Meetings of the
Authority.

6. (1) The Authority shall meet at least once in six months at such time and place as appointed by the Chairperson.

(2) The Chairperson shall preside over the meetings of the Authority, and if, for any reason, the Chairperson is unable to attend a meeting of the Authority, any other member nominated by the Chairperson shall preside over the meeting.

(3) One-half of the total number of members of the Authority, including the Chairperson, shall constitute the quorum and all decisions of the Authority shall be taken by a majority of the members present and voting:

Provided that in the event of equality of votes, the Chairperson or in his absence, the member nominated under sub-section (2), shall have the casting vote.

(4) The Chairperson shall have the power of general superintendence, direction and control of the affairs of the Authority and without prejudice to any provisions of this Act, exercise and discharge such other powers and functions of the Authority as may be prescribed.

(5) All decisions of the Authority shall be signed by the Chairperson or the Member Secretary.

(6) If the Chairperson or any member of the Authority has any direct or indirect financial or other interest in any matter coming up for consideration at a meeting of the Authority, they shall, as soon as possible after the relevant circumstances have come to their knowledge, disclose the nature of their interest upon such matter for consideration and such disclosure shall be recorded in writing and the Chairperson or member, as the case may be, shall not take part in any deliberation or decision of the Authority with respect to such matter.

7. No act or proceedings of the Authority shall be invalidated merely by reason of, — Proceedings of the Authority not to be invalidated.

(a) any vacancy or any defect, in the constitution of the Authority;

(b) any defect in the appointment or nomination of a member of the Authority; or

(c) any irregularity in the procedure adopted by the Authority not affecting the merits of the case.

8. (1) The terms and conditions for the appointment of the nominated members shall be such as may be prescribed. Terms and conditions of appointment of nominated members of the Authority.

(2) Any person who ceased to be a nominated member shall be eligible for re-nomination.

(3) A nominated member may, at any time, by writing under his hand addressed to the Authority, resign from his office.

9. If, at any point of time, it appears to the Government that a nominated or co-opted member has conducted himself in a manner unfit to hold office or has been guilty of misconduct or neglect, which in the opinion of the Government renders his removal from the membership of the Authority as expedient, the Government may, after giving such member, a reasonable opportunity to show cause, by an order, remove such member from the office. Removal from membership of the Authority.

10. The Authority shall, for the purposes of this Act, have the following powers, namely: — Powers of the Authority.

(a) formulation of State Water Policy and revision thereof;

(b) preparation of the State Water Resources Management Plan and modifications thereof;

(c) determination and fixation of tariffs for various classes of commercial water user;

(d) make appointment of officers, staff and consultants for the Authority as may be required from time to time to assist the Authority in the discharge of its functions;

(e) identification of authorities to be designated as the Implementing Authorities in the State at various levels;

(f) defining the roles and responsibilities of Implementing Authorities;

(g) assigning specific duties to the Implementing Authorities such as regulation, management and augmentation of the water resources, ensuring sustainable use, monitoring water quality and quantity and enforcing compliance with all applicable standards of water that are binding under any law in force;

(h) requiring any Implementing Authority to collect and submit such information in such form and manner as it may direct;

(i) requiring any Government department or any organisation to furnish such information as it may deem necessary to perform its functions and discharge its duties under this Act;

(j) supervising and monitoring the actions and proceedings of the Committees and Implementing Authorities;

(k) making regulations, prescribing functions of the Committees and the Implementing Authorities and the manner in which their functions shall be monitored;

(l) making recommendations to the Government regarding modifications to the State Water Resources Management Plan;

(m) supervision and control over its officers and staff;

(n) deciding any other matter which may be placed before the Authority by the Committees and Implementing Authorities;

(o) seeking any technical or administrative assistance from any departments or undertakings of the Government as it may require in the performance of its functions.

Duties and functions
of the Authority.

11. (1) The Authority shall co-ordinate, promote and regulate the adoption of water resources management practices in the State in accordance with the essential principles, with the overall objective of ensuring water security for all in compliance with the provisions of this Act. The Authority shall ensure—

(a) sustainable access to adequate quantity of appropriate quality water for all;

(b) prevention of water pollution, discharge of untreated water into rivers, streams and water bodies and contamination of surface and groundwater;

(c) conservation, protection and preservation of the water resources, considering the environment, climate change and the challenges posed by climate change;

(d) preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, promoting a sustainable model of development;

(e) adaptation and mitigation measures against the impact of climate change.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the functions of the Authority shall include—

(a) to review the laws in force in the State, guidelines and systems in place regarding water resources regulation, management and augmentation by and between various Implementing Authorities and recommend to the Government necessary changes to make them compatible with this Act, remove overlapping of functions or jurisdictions, define clear roles and responsibilities including new responsibilities, to align institutional structure with the essential principles of water resources management;

(b) to review the current practices and standards of performance of Implementing Authorities and frame guidelines and performance indicators for them to achieve the requisite professional standards of water resources management in the State;

(c) to coordinate, facilitate and ensure capacity building of the Implementing Authorities in the areas of identified gaps with a focus on achieving effective water resources management;

(d) to promote, facilitate and enforce conjunctive use of surface water, groundwater and treated waste water, climate resilient, water resources infrastructure and to enhance operational excellence in the existing and proposed water resources infrastructure;

(e) to promote water supply augmentation through water conservation, rainwater harvesting and use of treated waste water on a large scale through the Implementing Authorities;

(f) to review the development needs of water resources projects within the sub-basin or river basin;

(g) to monitor the implementation of the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan.

(3) The Authority shall perform the following functions for implementation of the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan without prejudice to the functions under this section,—

(a) monitoring the preparation and implementation of District Water Resources Management Plans and maintaining a database of practices adopted or measures taken in pursuance of such plans;

(b) conducting information, education and communication activities, as well as capacity building programmes in relation to water resources management including creation of awareness and knowledge on water resources management at the district, block, municipal and village panchayat levels;

(c) consolidating and maintaining a database of information relating to sinking and creation of other groundwater abstraction sources;

(d) recommending water resources conservation measures including rainwater harvesting, watershed and catchment conservation, including groundwater conservation and recharge structures, as per the criteria specified in the water resources management plan for respective areas or locations;

(e) recommending incentives to switch from water-intensive crops to low water consuming crops and for adopting water conserving and energy-efficient technologies;

(f) demarcation and classification of Groundwater Protection Zones, Floodplain Zones and River Conservation Zones and laying down norms for activities within them in accordance with this Act;

(g) framing relevant guidelines and regulations for regulating, managing and augmenting water resources including water resource conservation;

(h) to promote technology, research and innovation in water resources management;

(i) to prepare data base of all water resources and water users of the State in such manner as may be prescribed;

(j) ensure sustainable and equitable water availability by promoting climate resilient practices, integrating conservation, efficient use and adaptive infrastructure in all water resources planning and management;

(k) such other functions as may be prescribed.

District Water
Resources
Committee.

12. (1) The Government shall, by notification, constitute a District Water Resources Committee for each district, consisting of the following members, namely:—

(a) District Collector, who shall be the Chairperson, *ex-officio*;

(b) an officer of the Water Resources Department, not below the rank of Executive Engineer or Deputy Director (Geology), who shall be the Member Secretary;

(c) an officer of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, not below the rank of Executive Engineer or Assistant Director of Panchayats;

(d) an officer of any one of the urban local bodies in the district, not below the rank of Executive Engineer or Commissioner ;

(e) an officer of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, not below the rank of District Environmental Engineer;

(f) an officer of the Agriculture Department, not below the rank of Joint Director;

(g) the General Manager, District Industries Centre;

(h) an officer of the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board in the district, not below the rank of Executive Engineer;

(i) an officer of the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited, not below the rank of Executive Engineer;

(j) the Assistant Director (Geology), Water Resources Department;

(k) one representative to be nominated by the Chairperson from any one of the recognised social group or civil society organisation, including farmers' associations, water users' associations, women self-help groups or community based organisations working in the field of water conservation or community development in the district;

(l) one expert in the field of water resources to be nominated by the Chairperson.

(2) The Committee shall meet at least once in three months at such time and place as appointed by the Chairperson.

(3) Sections 6,7 ,8 and 9 shall, *mutatis mutandis* apply in relation to the Committees in so far as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this section.

13. (1) The primary functions of the District Water Resources Committee shall be to identify and address water-related challenges and to prepare, monitor and implement the District Water Security Plan, District Water Budgets and District Water Resources Management Plans in compliance with the State Water Resources Management Plan.

Functions of the District Water Resources Committee.

(2) The District Water Resources Committee shall also perform the following other functions, namely:—

(a) to assist the Authority in discharge of its functions as may be necessary and to comply with the directions of the Authority;

(b) to guide and coordinate with the Implementing Authorities towards implementing the components of the plans and provisions of this Act;

(c) to facilitate inter-sectoral collaboration, promoting water resources management including conjunctive use, climate resilience and water use efficiency;

(d) to carry out water supply augmentation through conservation, recharge, rain water harvesting and use of treated waste water;

(e) to facilitate open data sharing, encourage research and innovation and coordinate capacity building;

(f) to facilitate water sharing to rural and urban local bodies having water scarcity;

(g) such other functions as may be prescribed.

Implementing
Authority.

14. (1) The Government shall, by notification, designate any officer or authority as Implementing Authority for such department or area or purpose as specified therein for implementing the provisions of this Act.

(2) The Implementing Authorities shall regulate, manage and augment the water resources in the State as directed by the Authority as per the provisions of this Act.

Duties and functions
of the Implementing
Authorities.

15. The Implementing Authorities, in discharge of their functions relating to water resources, shall—

(a) act in accordance with the essential principles of water resources management laid down under this Act;

(b) act in accordance with the Water Resources Management Plans;

(c) implement measures relating to water resources management recommended by the Authority;

(d) enforce norms, protocols and standards governing water resources management, including permitted, prohibited and restricted activities relating to regulation, management and augmentation of water resources;

(e) collect tariff as determined and fixed by the Authority;

(f) consult and coordinate with other Implementing Authorities, Committees as well as with the Authority, to effectively implement the provisions of this Act;

(g) make available or cause to make available in the public domain, all topographical, geological, meteorological, hydrological, sub-soil, land use and other water related data available with them, in such manner as may be prescribed;

(h) submit such data and reports to the Authority, from time to time, for demarcation of Groundwater Protection Zones, Floodplain Zones and River Conservation Zones;

(i) perform such other functions as may be prescribed.

16. (1) In carrying out their functions under this Act, the Implementing Authorities shall have the power to — Powers to enter, inspect and seize, etc.

(a) enter upon any land or building and to inspect or take specimens from any well, soil, water resources or other materials;

(b) to seize and take possession of any equipment utilised in contravention of the provisions of this Act;

(c) seal any well used for groundwater abstraction in contravention of the provisions of this Act;

(d) close, prohibit or regulate any activity, operation or process being carried out in contravention of the provisions of this Act;

(e) take action to stop or regulate the supply of electricity, water or any other service for any activity, operation or process being carried out in contravention of the provisions of this Act.

(2) The Implementing Authorities shall take any action under this section only after giving prior notice to the water user concerned and reasonable opportunity of being heard.

CHAPTER - IV.

REGULATION, MANAGEMENT AND AUGMENTATION OF WATER RESOURCES.

17. (1) No commercial water user shall on and from the date of commencement of this Act, abstract or transport water or carry on any activity incidental thereto without obtaining authorisation from the relevant Implementing Authority: Regulation of abstraction and transportation of water.

Provided that the commercial water users already abstracting or transporting water shall not continue to abstract or transport water without obtaining authorisation from the relevant Implementing Authority within six months from the date of commencement of this Act:

Provided further that any authorisation granted by the competent authorities for abstraction or transportation of water before the commencement of this Act, shall be deemed to be the authorisation granted under this Act and it shall be valid for the period specified in such authorisation.

(2) Every commercial water user for obtaining such authorisation, shall make an application to the relevant Implementing Authority directly, by post or online accompanied with such fee and such documents, as may be prescribed, as may be notified in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*.

(3) Subject to such inspection in the manner as may be prescribed and genuineness of documents accompanied with the application under sub-section (2), the authorisation shall be granted through post or online within such time and in such form and manner, as may be prescribed. The authorisation shall be subject to such terms and conditions, as may be prescribed:

Provided that in order to prevent decline in the water table or deterioration in water quality or other effects that may be detrimental to the continued availability of appropriate quality water, the Implementing Authorities may, at any time after the issue of authorisation, modify, amend or cancel the terms of authorisation, for reasons to be recorded, after affording an opportunity of being heard either permanently or for a specified period.

Provided further authorization for drawal of surface water up to 45 lakh litres per day shall be granted by District Collector and for higher quantites by the Government.

(4) Every application for renewal of the authorisation granted or deemed to be granted under this Act shall be made not less than three months before the date of the expiry of the period of such authorisation.

(5) The provisions of this Act shall, as far as may be, apply in relation to the renewal of the authorisation, as they apply in relation to the grant of authorisation under this section.

(6) The requirement of authorisation under this section shall not apply to the following, namely:—

(a) residential houses or apartments or group houses, abstracting water for drinking and domestic purposes;

(b) agriculture and horticulture purposes;

(c) water supply schemes by the State and Central Governments, urban and rural local bodies;

(d) State and Central Government educational institutions or Hospitals or Infrastructures;

(e) private educational institutions and private hospitals abstracting water not more than such quantum as may be prescribed;

(f) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises except packaged drinking water units, abstracting water not more than such quantum as may be prescribed;

(g) shops and establishments abstracting water not more than such quantum as may be prescribed;

(h) charitable institutions, offices of the Central and State Government, administrative offices of the public sector undertakings, Armed Forces Establishment and Central Armed Police Force Establishment;

(i) any other category of water user abstracting water not more than such quantum as may be prescribed.

18. (1) The Implementing Authority that has granted an authorisation under this Act may, of its own motion, or on application filed before it or referred to it, suspend or cancel such authorisation if it is satisfied that —

Suspension or
cancellation of
authorisation.

(a) it is necessary to suspend or cancel such authorisation to ensure the availability of water for life or to prevent danger to life, public health or irreversible harm to the ecosystem; or

(b) the person to whom the authorisation was granted has acted in contravention of the terms and conditions subject to which it was granted, or in contravention of the provisions of this Act.

(2) No authorisation shall be suspended or cancelled without giving the person concerned a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

19. (1) Any person aggrieved by any order, decision or direction of the Implementing Authority made under sections 17 and 18, may within a period of one month from the date of receipt of such order, decision or direction, prefer an appeal in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed to the appellate authority as may be notified by the Government in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*.

Appeal against orders
under sections 17
and 18.

(2) No such appeal shall be entertained after the expiry of the period specified under sub-section (1):

Provided that the appellate authority may, at its discretion, allow further time not exceeding one month for preferring such appeal if it is satisfied that the appellant had sufficient cause for not preferring the appeal in time.

(3) The appellate authority may, pending the exercise of its powers, pass such order as it deems fit.

(4) On receipt of any such appeal, the appellate authority shall, after —

(i) giving the parties an opportunity of making representation;

(ii) making, if necessary, such inquiry as it deems fit;
and

(iii) considering all the circumstances of the case, make such order as it deems just and equitable within a period of two months from the date of receipt of the appeal.

20. (1) The Authority shall, with the approval of the Government, fix and revise tariff, from time to time, for abstraction of water by commercial water user.

Tariff for abstraction of
water.

(2) The Authority shall be guided by such factors as may be prescribed for the determination of tariff fixed or revised under sub-section (1).

Groundwater
Protection Zones.

21. (1) The Authority shall make recommendations to the Government to demarcate and notify the Groundwater Protection Zones in the identified areas in the State, based on the report of the Implementing Authorities, from time to time.

(2) On the recommendation of the Authority having regard to –

(a) the most recent and dynamic groundwater resource assessments ;

(b) the applicable Water Resources Management Plans for the concerned area;

(c) the nature of the aquifer, existing uses and users, groundwater availability, and the social, environmental and economic implications;

(d) protection and remediation of areas where the groundwater has been contaminated;

(e) protection of areas of the aquifer, particularly, recharge zones from threats such as physical deterioration, the Government shall demarcate and notify the Groundwater Protection Zones in the identified areas of the State, for the purpose of protecting and conserving groundwater in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*.

(3) In the Groundwater Protection Zones, the activities affecting the quantity or quality of groundwater shall be prohibited, restricted or regulated in such manner as may be prescribed.

(4) The rules relating to the Groundwater Protection Zones shall be adopted, implemented and enforced by the relevant Implementing Authorities.

Surveys and Mapping
of Rivers and
Floodplains.

22. (1) The Authority, in coordination and consultation with the Implementing Authorities, shall, within such time from its establishment as may be prescribed, cause surveys of rivers and floodplains to be carried out.

(2) Floodplain Zones and River Conservation Zones are critical areas for managing flood risk and protecting natural ecosystems and it shall be conserved and protected in such manner as may be prescribed by the relevant Implementing Authorities.

Floodplain Zones.

23. (1) The Authority shall make recommendations to the Government for demarcation of Floodplain Zones and list of activities prohibited or restricted therein, based on the report of the Implementing Authorities, from time to time.

(2) On the recommendations of the Authority, the Government may, by notification in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*,—

(a) demarcate floodplains or any part thereof into Floodplain Zones for such frequencies of floods as they deem appropriate, marking the highest flood level for each Floodplain Zone;

(b) specify the list of activities prohibited, restricted or regulated in the Floodplain Zones in such manner as may be prescribed.

(3) After notification of the Floodplain Zones, their limits shall be marked by boundary stones or other suitable marks by the relevant Implementing Authorities.

(4) The rules relating to the Floodplain Zones shall be adopted, implemented and enforced by the relevant Implementing Authorities.

24. (1) The Authority shall make recommendations to the Government for demarcation of River Conservation Zones and list of activities prohibited or restricted therein, based on the report of the Implementing Authorities, from time to time.

(2) On the recommendations of the Authority, the Government may, by notification in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*, shall —

(a) demarcate River Conservation Zones and permit certain activities to continue in such zones, subject to such conditions as may be specified, having regard to the traditional uses of riverine resources, and the rights of local communities and their livelihoods;

(b) specify the activities prohibited, restricted, or regulated in the River Conservation Zones, in such manner as may be prescribed.

(3) The rules relating to the River Conservation Zones shall be adopted, implemented and enforced by the relevant Implementing Authorities.

25. (1) The Committees and Implementing Authorities, shall carry out the water resources management and augmentation as per the regulations, guidelines and plans formulated under this Act and shall—

(a) implement the components identified under the State Water Resources Management Plan and District Water Resources Management Plan in compliance with this Act;

(b) identify suitable places for construction of artificial recharge structures in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed;

(c) adopt conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater;

(d) adopt measures for water conservation through guidelines on optimising water usage and regulate the abstraction or transportation of water by commercial water users from the water resources in the State and by promoting usage of treated waste water;

(e) prioritise utilisation of treated waste water for gardening, cooling purposes in water-intensive industries and gated communities, in such manner as may be prescribed;

(f) formulate guidelines for prevention of the sea water intrusion in coastal aquifers as may be prescribed.

(2) With a view to ensure optimum utilisation of ground and surface water and formation of hydraulic barrier against seawater intrusion, the Government shall issue instructions for implementing artificial recharge schemes.

Tamil Nadu Water
Resources
Management Plan.

26. (1) The Authority shall prepare a State Water Resources Management Plan called the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan, within such time from the establishment of the Authority as may be prescribed.

(2) The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan shall have the overall objective of securing water to all in the State.

(3) The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan shall be prepared based on the terms as defined by the Authority and shall address and comprise of but not limited to the following, namely:—

(a) Water Security Plan for the entire State;

(b) Water budget for the entire State;

(c) the overarching State level master plan on water resources management which shall provide inputs, guidelines for preparation of the District Water Resources Management Plans and its implementation;

(d) proposals on inter-linking of rivers, tanks and other water bodies to manage and store the excess flood water and on infrastructure to serve the drought prone area;

(e) plans to manage, protect and conserve groundwater and its resources;

(f) define Groundwater Protection Zones and formulate plans to manage, protect and conserve groundwater, its resources and the Groundwater Protection Zones;

(g) management and utilisation of river water and rain water getting drained into sea.

(4) The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan shall be the basis for preparation of the District Water Resources Management Plans which shall be a subset of the State Water Resources Management Plan and shall detail the components of State plan for implementation at district and village levels.

(5) The Authority shall consult all Implementing Authorities and relevant stakeholders in such manner as may be prescribed, for the preparation of the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan.

(6) The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan shall be prepared for a period of fifteen years and shall have phasing plan for every five years.

(7) The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan shall provide necessary inputs towards preparation of the Water Budget, Flood Risk Management Plan and other Regulations and Guidelines which shall be formulated under the provisions of this Act.

(8) The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan shall be submitted to the Government for approval within such time as may be prescribed.

(9) As soon as may be, after the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan has been submitted to the Government, but not later than such time as may be prescribed, the Government shall give the consent to the Authority to the publication of the said Plan in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*.

27. (1) After the publication of the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Plan in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*, each Committee shall, in accordance with the State Water Resources Management Plan and in such manner as may be prescribed, prepare the District Water Resources Management Plan for the district concerned, to implement at the district and village level for a period of fifteen years and shall have phasing plan for every five years.

District Water
Resources
Management Plans.

(2) The District Water Resources Management Plan shall be submitted to the Authority for approval within such time as may be prescribed.

(3) As soon as may be, after the District Water Resources Management Plan has been submitted to the Authority, but not later than such time as may be prescribed, the Authority shall give the consent to the Committee concerned to the publication of the said Plan in the *District Gazette*.

28.(1) All water resources management plans framed under this Act shall be valid and binding for a period of fifteen years from the date of the notification, unless climatic, geological or hydro-geological events require them to be reviewed and amended earlier:

Review of Water
Resources
Management
Plans.

Provided that the Government may, if they deem necessary, direct the Authority to undertake such review of the State Water Resources Management Plan within such period as may be specified by the Government.

(2) The process of review of all the water resources management plans shall begin at such time before their expiry as may be prescribed and shall be completed before the expiry of the plan period.

CHAPTER-V.

PENALTY FOR CONTRAVENTION.

Penalty for
contravention.

29. (1) Any commercial water user who abstracts or transports water without authorisation, shall be liable to penalty of twenty thousand rupees or twenty times of the tariff fixed under sub-section (1) of section 20 for the quantity of water so abstracted or transported, whichever is higher and in case of second or subsequent contravention, shall be liable to penalty of forty thousand rupees or forty times of the said tariff for the quantity of water so abstracted or transported, whichever is higher.

(2) Any commercial water user who abstracts or transports water in contravention of the terms and conditions of the authorisation, shall be liable to penalty of ten thousand rupees or ten times of the tariff fixed under sub-section (1) of section 20 for the quantity of water so abstracted or transported in contravention of the authorisation, whichever is higher and in case of second or subsequent contravention, shall be liable to penalty of twenty thousand rupees or twenty times of the said tariff for the quantity of water so abstracted or transported, whichever is higher.

(3) Any person who contravenes any other provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder shall be liable to a penalty of not exceeding ten thousand rupees and in case of second or subsequent contravention, shall be liable to a penalty of not exceeding twenty thousand rupees.

(4) Whoever pollutes or contaminates any water resources or causes any other environmental harm shall be liable for the cost of remediation of such harm.

Contravention by
companies.

30. (1) Where a contravention of any of the provisions of this Act or any rule made thereunder has been committed by a company, every person who, at the time the contravention was committed, was in charge of, and was responsible to, the company for the conduct of the business of the company as well as the company, shall be deemed to have contravened and shall be liable for a penalty specified under this Act:

Provided that nothing contained in this sub-section shall render any such person liable to any penalty provided in this Act, if he proves that the contravention was committed without his knowledge or that he had exercised all due diligence to prevent such contravention.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where any such contravention has been committed by a company and it is proved that the contravention has been committed with the consent or connivance of or is attributable to any neglect on the part of, any director, manager, secretary or other officer of the company, such director, manager, secretary or other officer, shall also be deemed to have contravened and shall be liable for a penalty specified under this Act.

Explanation.— For the purposes of this section,—

(a) “company” means any body corporate and includes a trust, a firm, a society or other association of individuals; and

(b) “director” in relation to —

(i) a firm, means a partner in the firm,

(ii) a society, a trust or other association of individuals, means the person who is entrusted under the rules of the society or other association, with the management of the affairs of the society or other association, as the case may be.

31. (1) The Government may, for the purposes of adjudicating the contraventions and determining penalties under this Act, by notification in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*, appoint an officer to be the adjudicating officer to hold an inquiry and impose penalty in such manner as may be prescribed: Adjudication.

Provided that the Government may appoint as many adjudicating officers as may be required.

(2) The adjudicating officer may summon and enforce the attendance of any person acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the case to give evidence or to produce any document, which in the opinion of the adjudicating officer, may be useful for, or relevant to, the subject matter of the inquiry and if, on such inquiry, he is satisfied that the person concerned has failed to comply with any of the provisions of this Act, he may impose such penalty as he deems fit:

Provided that no such penalty shall be imposed without giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

32. (1) Any person who is aggrieved by an order passed by the adjudicating officer under section 31 may prefer an appeal to the appellate officer as may be notified by the Government in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette* within sixty days from the date of receipt of the order, in such manner as may be prescribed: Appeal.

Provided that an appeal may be admitted after the expiry of the period of sixty days, if the appellate officer is satisfied that the appellant had sufficient cause for not preferring the appeal within that period.

(2) The appellate officer may, after giving the parties to the appeal an opportunity of being heard, pass such order as he may think fit.

(3) The appellate officer shall dispose of the appeal within sixty days from the date of filing of appeal.

33. If the penalty imposed under section 31 or section 32, Recovery. as the case may be, is not deposited in such manner as may be prescribed, the amount due shall be recovered as an arrear of land revenue as per Tamil Nadu Revenue Recovery Act, 1864.

34. Nothing contained in this Act shall be deemed to prevent any person from being prosecuted under any other law for any act or omission which constitutes a contravention under this Act. No bar on prosecution under other laws.

CHAPTER-VI.

ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT.

35. The Government may make such grants and advances to the Authority as they may deem necessary for the performance of its functions and the discharge of its duties under this Act. Grants by the Government.

36. The Authority shall prepare, in such form and at such time in each financial year, as may be prescribed, its budget for the next financial year, showing the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Authority and shall forward the same to the Government. Budget of the Authority.

37. (1) The accounts of the Authority shall be maintained in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed. Accounts and audit.

(2) The Authority shall prepare an annual statement of accounts in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed.

(3) The accounts of the Authority shall be audited at least once in a year by such auditor as the Government may appoint in this behalf.

CHAPTER-VII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

38. The Government may, from time to time, issue such directions to the Authority as they may deem fit, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act and it shall be the duty of the Authority to comply with such directions. Power of the Government to give directions.

39. The Government shall undertake a comprehensive review of all laws or legal provisions in force in the State, relating to water, water resources or water resources management within two years from the date of coming into force of this Act, so as to ascertain their compatibility with this Act. Compatibility review.

40. (1) The Government may make rules to carry out all or any of the purposes of this Act. Power of the Government to make rules.

(2) (a) All rules made under this Act shall be published in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette* and unless they are expressed to come into force on a particular day, shall come into force on the day on which they are so published.

(b) All notifications issued under this Act shall, unless they are expressed to come into force on a particular day, shall come into force on the day on which they are so published.

(3) Every rule or notification made or the order issued under section 42 shall, as soon as possible, after it is made or issued, be placed on the table of the Legislative Assembly, and if, before the expiry of the session, in which it is so placed or the next session, the Assembly makes any modification in any such rule, notification or order or the Assembly decides that the rule, notification or order should not be made or issued, the rule, notification or order shall, thereafter have effect, only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule, notification or order.

41. The Authority may, with the previous approval of the Government, by notification in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*, make regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder to carry out the purposes of this Act. Power of the Authority to make Regulations.

42. If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Government may, by an order published in the *Tamil Nadu Government Gazette*, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as appear to them to be necessary or expedient for removing such difficulty: Power to remove difficulties.

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

43. No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against any of the members, officers or staff of the Authority, Committee or Implementing Authority, in respect of anything done or intended to be done by them in good faith, in the discharge of their official functions or in exercise of the powers under this Act, the rules or regulations. Protection of action taken in good faith.

44. (1) This Act shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, existing or other laws relating to water, water resources or water resources management in the State, and shall be read harmoniously with all such other laws. Conflict with other laws.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), or in any State laws for the time being in force in the State, where there is a conflict between the provisions of this Act and any other State law relating to water, water resources or water resources management in the State, the provisions of this Act shall take precedence and have an overriding effect.

Annual report.

45. The Authority shall prepare for every year a report of its activities during that year and submit the report to the Government in such form and on or before such date as may be prescribed.

Exemption.

46. The Government may, by notification and for reasons to be specified therein, exempt any water user from any of the provisions of this Act, or the rules made thereunder, subject to such conditions as they may deem fit and may, in the like manner, vary or cancel such exemption.

Members, officers and staff of the Authority and Committee to be public servants.

47. When acting or purporting to act in pursuance of this Act, every member, officer and staff of the Authority and member of the Committee shall be deemed to be a public servant within the meaning of clause (28) of section 2 of the Bharathiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

Central Act 45 of 2023.

Repeal.

48. The Chennai Metropolitan Area Groundwater (Regulation) Act, 1987 is hereby repealed.

Tamil Nadu Act 27 of 1987.

PART – II.

AMENDMENT TO THE TAMIL NADU PANCHAYATS ACT, 1994.

Amendment of section 143-A.

49. In section 143-A of the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994, the second proviso to sub-section (1) shall be omitted.

Tamil Nadu Act 21 of 1994.

PART – III.

AMENDMENT TO THE TAMIL NADU URBAN LOCAL BODIES ACT, 1998.

Amendment of section 164-A.

50. In section 164-A of the Tamil Nadu Urban Local Bodies Act, 1998, the second proviso to sub-section (1) shall be omitted.

Tamil Nadu Act 9 of 1999.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Rapid population growth, urbanisation, industrialisation and the impacts of climate change have resulted in increasing stress on the surface water and groundwater resources of the State of Tamil Nadu. Unregulated extraction and improper utilisation of water have adversely affected water security and the sustainability of water-related ecosystems. There is a need for a holistic and integrated approach to water governance for all types of water resources, including groundwater, surface water, wastewater and basins.

2. In order to ensure sustainable, equitable and integrated management of surface water and groundwater and to regulate, conserve, manage and develop water resources across the State, the Government have decided to enact a comprehensive new legislation for regulation, management and augmentation of the entire water resources of the State by repealing the Chennai Metropolitan Area Groundwater (Regulation) Act, 1987 (Tamil Nadu Act 27 of 1987) so as to ensure an uniform regulatory system throughout the State. The proposed legislation provides for constitution of Tamil Nadu Water Resources Management Authority, District Committees, formulation of State and District Water Resources Management Plans, regulation of existing and new commercial water users, levy of water tariff for abstraction of water by them and measures for flood management and for matters connected therewith.

3. The Bill seeks to give effect to the above decision.

DURAIMURUGAN,
Minister for Water Resources.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clauses 1 (3) , 5, 6 (4), 8 (1), 11 (3), 12 (1), 13 (2), 14 (1), 15, 17, 19 (1), 20 (2), 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 45 and 46 of the Bill authorise the Government to issue notifications, make rules, or pass orders, as the case may be, for the purposes specified therein.

2. The powers delegated are normal and are not of an exceptional character.

DURAIMURUGAN,
Minister for Water Resources.

Secretariat,
Chennai,
24th January 2026.

K. SRINIVASAN,
Principal Secretary.