

# Start removing invasive plant species immediately, says High Court

It has already been 7 years since the court passed orders on the issue in 2015

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The Madras High Court on Monday asked the State government to immediately commence a pilot project for the eradication of invasive alien plant species such as eucalyptus, wattle and prosopis juliflora, and carry out proper ecological restoration of natural habitats.

A Division Bench of Justices V. Bharathidasan and N. Sathish Kumar recommended Environment and Forests Secretary Supriya Sahu for having come up with a draft Tamil Nadu Policy on Invasive Plants and Ecological Restoration (TNPIPER) and making it available in the public domain.

However, not wanting



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things to remain on paper any longer as it has already been seven years since the court, in 2015, ordered the annihilation of exotic species and the restoration of shola forests in the hilly regions of the State, the judges asked the Secretary to start the work immediately.

They asked her to come back to the court on March 18 and report that the work had begun. She agreed, and assured the court that the work will begin as early as possible. Earlier, she informed the judges that the draft policy was put in the public domain to invite

comments.

The opinions of various stakeholders were obtained and, in the second stage, seven teams of forest officials were constituted to visit Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat and Rajasthan to study the practices followed in those States. The teams had already gone there.

The teams were expected to submit their reports to the State government by March 9. Further, Chief Secretary V. Irai Anbu had approved a proposal worth ₹10 crore, and the funds would be released after clearance was obtained from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Secretary said.