Madurai Bench of Madras HC bars registration of documents on lands dedicated to Srirangam temple by an 1887 deed

Tamil Nadu · 25 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/25



News

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has restrained the Sub-Registrars of Srirangam, Tiruchirappalli Joint-III, Musiri and Kulithalai from registering any document relating to the lands listed in an 1887 deed (Document No. 1646 of 1887) that dedicated properties to the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam (reported 18 Oct 2026). A Division Bench of Justices C.V. Karthikeyan and R. Sakthivel, hearing a petition by A. Sampathkumar, observed that the deed reflects an 'absolute dedication' of the scheduled lands to the temple. The petitioner alleged that some lands may have been transferred in breach of the endowment and sought their identification and verification against revenue and registration records, and legal action by the HR&CE Department. The case will be heard next on 5 Nov 2026.

Key facts

Court	Madurai Bench, Madras HC – Justices C.V. Karthikeyan & R. Sakthivel
Deed	Document No. 1646 of 1887 – absolute dedication to the temple
Restrained	Sub-Registrars of Srirangam, Trichy Joint-III, Musiri, Kulithalai
Petitioner	A. Sampathkumar; next hearing 5 Nov 2026

Madurai Bench	Functioning since 24 July 2004
Laws	TN HR&CE Act 1959; Registration Act 1908

Background

- Srirangam temple: on an island between the Kaveri and the Kollidam; Lord Ranganatha in reclining posture. Foremost of the 108 Vaishnava Divya Desams, praised by the Alvars. Seven prakaras and 21 gopurams; regarded as one of the largest functioning Hindu temples in the world.
- Rajagopuram: 13 tiers, about 236 ft, built through the efforts of the 44th Jeer of Ahobila Mutt (Azhagiasingar); consecrated in 1987. Ramanuja spent his later life at Srirangam; tradition holds that Kambar first presented his Ramayanam here.
- Legal background: Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act 1926 (Justice Party government) → Tamil Nadu HR&CE Act 1959. Under Section 34, any sale, mortgage, exchange or lease beyond 5 years of a temple's immovable property is void unless sanctioned by the Commissioner.
- Constitution: Article 26 – religious denominations may own and acquire movable and immovable property and administer it in accordance with law. 'Registration of deeds and documents' is in the Concurrent List (List III, Entry 6); the Registration Act 1908 is a central law that States may amend.

Tamil Nadu link: Srirangam temple won the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit for cultural heritage conservation in 2017 for its restoration – the first temple in Tamil Nadu to get it. Musiri is in Tiruchirappalli district and Kulithalai in Karur district.

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