Chidambaram Nataraja temple: Madras High Court sets up retired judges-led committee to oversee administration

Tamil Nadu · 30 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/30



News

In its judgment of 30 Oct 2026, a Madras High Court Bench (Justices G. Jayachandran and E. Manoharan) constituted a five-member committee to oversee the administration of the Chidambaram Nataraja temple. The verdict disposed of petitions by the Podhu Dikshitars against the Tamil Nadu G.O. (17 May 2022) allowing devotees to worship from atop the Kanaka Sabha, and petitions supporting it. The court said the temple had not been properly managed since administration was handed to the Dikshitars in 2014, full income accounts had not been given for about 12 years, and new constructions had damaged ancient sculptures. Daily rituals and festivals remain the Dikshitars' prerogative.

Key facts

Committee	Chairman: retd. Justice V. Bharathidasan; Vice-chairman: retd. Justice R. Sureshkumar; Member: retd. IAS officer C. Rajendran
Ex-officio members	Secretary, Podhu Dikshitars' body; Secretary, HR&CE Department
Tasks	Recover encroached property, inventory assets incl. jewels, collect rent arrears, remove unauthorised structures, renovation and consecration
Worship	All devotees to have equal access to the Kanaka Sabha and to sing Thevaram and Thiruvasagam

Constitution	Permanent supervision would violate Article 26(d); committee till defects are cured
Place	Chidambaram, Cuddalore district

Background

- Case history: the State appointed an Executive Officer in 1987; the High Court upheld it in 2009. But the Supreme Court (Justices B.S. Chauhan and S.A. Bobde), on 6 Jan 2014, held that the Podhu Dikshitars are a 'religious denomination' and that the State may intervene only temporarily to cure mismanagement, and returned the administration to them.
- Polity: Article 25 – freedom of conscience and religion; Article 26 – right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion; 26(d) – administer property in accordance with law. In Tamil Nadu temples are administered under the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Act, 1959.
- Culture–history: it is the 'Akasha' (space) shrine among the Pancha Bhoota Sthalams; the deity is Nataraja performing the Ananda Tandava. The 'Chidambara Rahasyam' denotes formless space. Nataraja was revered as the family deity of the Cholas; Parantaka Chola I is credited with covering the Chit Sabha with gold (Ponnambalam). The gopurams carry sculptures of the 108 karanas described in Bharata's 'Natya Shastra'.
- Literature: Manikkavasagar's 'Thiruvasagam' (8th Thirumurai) and 'Thirukkovaiyar' are linked with Chidambaram. Its old name 'Thillai' comes from the Thillai trees (a mangrove species) once found here.

Tamil Nadu link: Chidambaram is in Cuddalore district; Annamalai University here was founded in 1929 by Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar. The G.O. permitting worship from the Kanaka Sabha was issued by the Tamil Nadu Government on 17 May 2022.

Shanmugam IAS Academy – your next step

- **Courses:** TNPSC Group 1, 2 / 2A (Prelims + Mains), Group 4, UPSC / IAS – Coimbatore · Madurai · Online – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/fees
- **Books (PDF):** TNPSC PYQ books, UPSC books – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/study-materials
- **Free quiz + daily PDFs:** https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/free-pdf-download · All news of this day: https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/30

Admissions – call / WhatsApp: 99941 46662 · 99944 27714 · www.shanmugamiasacademy.in