Madras HC orders immediate closure of 87 unauthorised resorts in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

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News

On Tuesday, 3 Nov 2026, a Madras High Court Bench of Justices N. Sathish Kumar and G.K. Muthukumar ordered the immediate closure of all 87 resorts operating in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve area (Erode district) without planning permission / building approval from the Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP), and steps to demolish them as per law. The Erode Collector's status report said none had DTCP approval, nor Hill Area Conservation Authority (HACA) clearance for changing land use from residential to commercial. Unlicensed units are to be locked and sealed; the case filed by environmentalist Dr R. Karpagam (W.P. 13711 of 2022) was adjourned to 27 Nov.

Key facts

Bench / date	Justices N. Sathish Kumar & G.K. Muthukumar; 3 Nov 2026
Case	Dr R. Karpagam v. PCCF & Chief Wildlife Warden (W.P. 13711 of 2022)
Violation	87 resorts – no DTCP planning/building approval; no HACA clearance for land-use change
Order	Immediate closure, demolition as per law; unlicensed units to be locked and sealed
Next hearing	27 Nov 2026 – action-taken report

Reserve area	Core 793.49 + buffer 614.91 = 1,408.4 sq km; tiger reserve since 2013 (NTCA)

Background

- Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve: notified in 2013; covers the Sathyamangalam and Hasanur forest divisions. It is contiguous with Mudumalai, BRT (Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple) and Bandipur tiger reserves; the Moyar valley links it to Mudumalai. Home to elephant, tiger, leopard, sloth bear, gaur and blackbuck.
- Law: Project Tiger – 1973. The 2006 amendment to the Wild Life (Protection) Act made the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) a statutory body, chaired by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. A reserve's core is its 'critical tiger habitat'.
- Precedent: on 14 Oct 2020 the Supreme Court (Bench led by CJI S.A. Bobde) upheld the Tamil Nadu Government's notification of an elephant corridor in the Sigur Plateau of the Nilgiris, affirming a July 2011 Madras High Court ruling; resorts on the corridor were closed.
- Planning law: the DTCP grants planning/building approval outside the Chennai metropolitan area under the Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act, 1971. In hill areas, land-use change also needs HACA clearance.

Tamil Nadu link: Bhavanisagar Dam (Erode district) stands just below the confluence of the Bhavani and Moyar rivers (TN Water Resources Department). The Moyar flows through the Mudumalai–Sathyamangalam landscape.

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