CM Vijay launches 'Eri' portal to help NGOs restore water bodies

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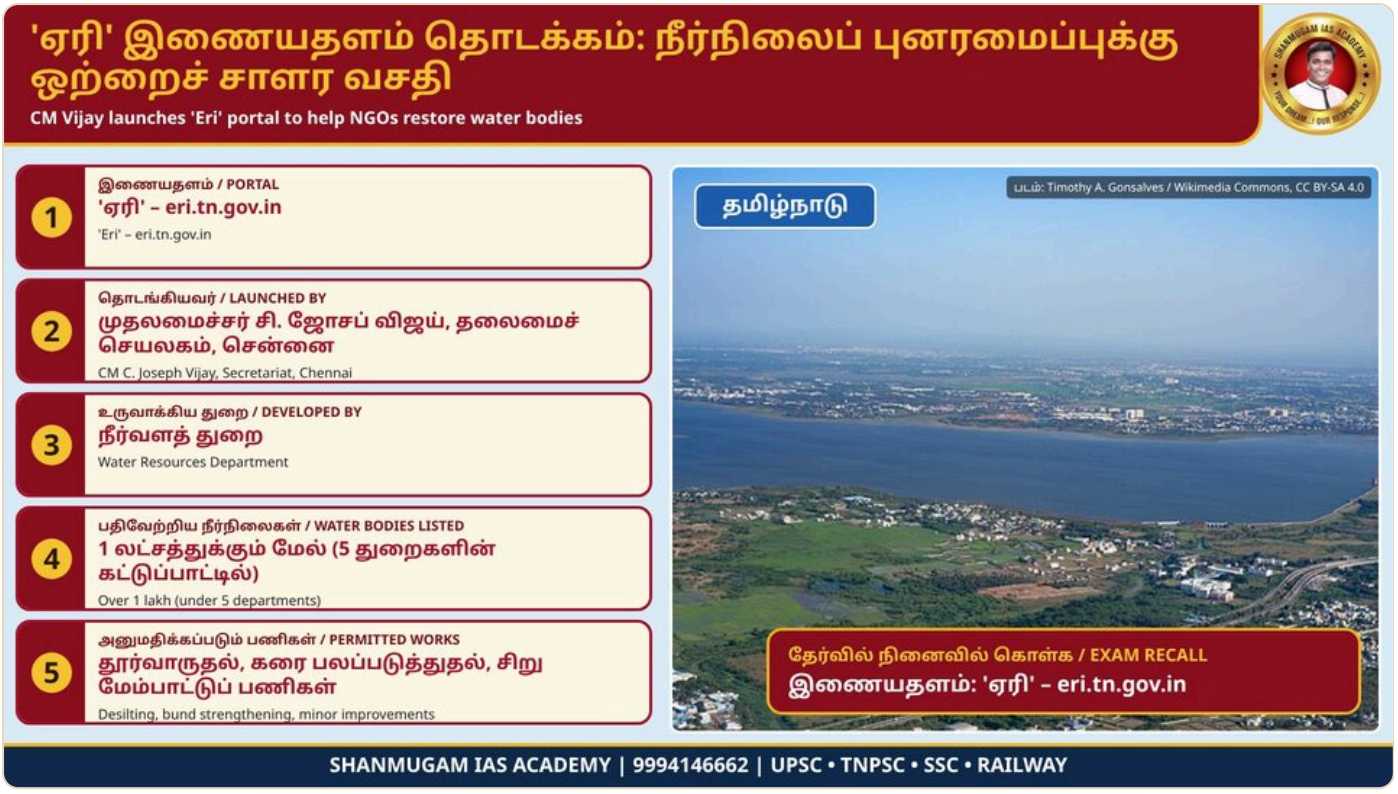

News

Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay launched the 'Eri' (lake) portal, eri.tn.gov.in, developed by the Water Resources Department, at the Secretariat in Chennai to make it easier for NGOs and volunteers to restore water bodies. It was built after CSR-funded groups complained of difficulty in getting no-objection certificates (NOCs) from several departments. The single-window portal lists over one lakh water bodies under five government departments. Applicants can apply online for desilting, strengthening bunds and permitted minor improvement works; the target is to issue certificates for eligible applications within 15 days. The Chief Engineer and Director of the State Water Resources Management Agency (SWaRMA) is the nodal officer. The CM handed NOCs to five organisations – Siruthuli, Environmental Foundation of India, Exnora International Foundation, Dhan Foundation and Mega Foundation.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Portal	'Eri' – eri.tn.gov.in
Launched by	CM C. Joseph Vijay, Secretariat, Chennai
Developed by	Water Resources Department
Water bodies listed	Over 1 lakh (under 5 departments)

Point	Details
Permitted works	Desilting, bund strengthening, minor improvements
Time limit	NOC within 15 days for eligible applications
Nodal officer	Chief Engineer & Director, SWaRMA
First NOC holders	Siruthuli, EFI, Exnora, Dhan Foundation, Mega Foundation

Background

- Tanks (eris) are central to Tamil Nadu's irrigation history. Large tanks were dug under the Pallavas and Cholas; Veeranam lake (Viranarayana Eri) in Cuddalore district dates from the 10th-century Chola period and now supplies Chennai. Parantaka I's Uthiramerur inscription (921 CE) names village committees such as the Eri-variyam (tank committee, 6 members), the Totta-variyam (gardens) and the Pon-variyam (gold).
- In the Seventh Schedule, 'water' – water supplies, irrigation, canals, drainage, embankments, storage and water power – is Entry 17 of the State List, subject to Union List Entry 56 (inter-State rivers). Article 262 deals with inter-State river water disputes.
- Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 makes CSR mandatory: companies with net worth of ₹500 crore, or turnover of ₹1,000 crore, or net profit of ₹5 crore must spend at least 2% of their average net profit of the three preceding years on Schedule VII activities, which include environmental sustainability and conservation of water.
- The Centre's Mission Amrit Sarovar was announced on 24 April 2022 (National Panchayati Raj Day) to build or revive at least 75 ponds (each at least 1 acre) in every district. The Ministry of Rural Development anchors it; over 68,000 Sarovars were completed by March 2025.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu has an old 'kudimaramathu' tradition of people maintaining tanks themselves. Siruthuli, one of the NOC holders, restores tanks in the Noyyal basin of Coimbatore, and Madurai-based Dhan Foundation works on tank-irrigation development.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay launched the 'Eri' (lake) portal, eri.tn.gov.in, developed by the Water Resources Department, at the Secretariat in Chennai to make it easier for NGOs and volunteers to restore water bodies.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Portal: 'Eri' – eri.tn.gov.in; Launched by: CM C. Joseph Vijay, Secretariat, Chennai; Developed by: Water Resources Department; Water bodies listed: Over 1 lakh (under 5 departments).

What is the background to this news?

Tanks (eris) are central to Tamil Nadu's irrigation history. Large tanks were dug under the Pallavas and Cholas; Veeranam lake (Viranarayana Eri) in Cuddalore district dates from the 10th-century Chola period and now supplies Chennai.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. In Chola-era village assemblies, what did the 'Eri-variyam' look after?

A) Temple affairs

B) Tanks and irrigation

C) Gardens

D) Gold and coinage

Answer: B – Explanation: Uthiramerur inscription (921 CE): Eri-variyam – tanks, 6 members; Totta-variyam – gardens; Pon-variyam – gold.

2. Which section of the Companies Act, 2013 makes Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandatory?

A) Section 125

B) Section 135

C) Section 149

D) Section 186

Answer: B – Explanation: Section 135: eligible companies must spend 2% of their 3-year average net profit on Schedule VII activities.

3. Water supplies, irrigation, canals, embankments and water storage fall in which List of the Seventh Schedule?

A) State List

B) Union List

C) Concurrent List

D) Residuary powers

Answer: A – Explanation: State List Entry 17 – subject to Union List Entry 56 on inter-State rivers.

4. Veeranam lake, a 10th-century Chola tank that supplies drinking water to Chennai, is in which district?

A) Ariyalur

B) Thanjavur

C) Viluppuram

D) Cuddalore

Answer: D – Explanation: Near Kattumannarkoil, Cuddalore district; fed by the Vadavar from the Kollidam. Pipeline to Chennai completed in 2004.

5. Which Union Ministry is the nodal ministry for Mission Amrit Sarovar, which creates ponds in every district?

A) Jal Shakti

B) Panchayati Raj

C) Environment

D) Rural Development

Answer: D – Explanation: Announced 24 Apr 2022; at least 75 ponds per district. Jal Shakti, Panchayati Raj and other ministries also take part.

Sources: Daily Thanthi; DT Next; ETV Bharat Tamil; Maalaimalar; Covai Mail; PIB (CSR); PIB (Amrit Sarovar). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.