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W.P.Nos.10486, 10812, 11644, 11653 and 11674 of 2021
and W.P.No.12184 of 2020

THE HON'BLE CHIEF JUSTICE
and
SENTHILKUMAR RAMAMOORTHY, J.

(Order of the Court was made by *the Hon'ble Chief Justice*)

Reports have been filed by the State, the Union Territory and the Union.

2. As far as the State of Tamil Nadu is concerned, the daily increase has crossed 30,000, but the rate of increase appears to be dropping over the last six days or so. Similarly, Puducherry shows an increase in numbers everyday, but Puducherry is also testing many more than about a week ago.

3. There is a shortage of vaccination in the State and, though a decision has been taken to call for a global tender, the allocation otherwise to be made by the Centre to this State should not be diverted in the wake of the State's decision to call for a global

tender, particularly as it may be a long-drawn process. However, as and when the global tender matures and supplies are received, the State's allocation by the Centre may be appropriately reworked.

4. At the moment, there does not appear to be much hue and cry over the non-availability of drugs, especially since the craze for Remdesivir has gone down with the public at large being aware that it may not be a life-saving drug but of limited efficacy.

5. Oxygen supply to the State has been augmented to 519 MT per day, but the supply of 40 MT from Palakkad to the southern and western districts may have been stopped from today and that may be an area of concern since it may be logistically difficult to effect supply to the southern districts from the units near Chennai. However, it is possible that additional supply may be coming in from another State, as indicated by the learned Additional Solicitor-General, to make good the loss of supply from Kerala. Over all, there does not appear to be a great dearth of oxygen in the State at the moment.

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6. Puducherry has also reported that there is sufficient supply of oxygen, though the number of beds in Puducherry needs to be augmented. The detailed report pertaining to Puducherry speaks of teams of doctors having been set up who visit patients for advising them whether they need hospitalisation or further assistance or be allowed to recover in home conditions. Puducherry has also reported camps, including mobile camps, conducting tests away from government hospitals and at various centres. There appears to be sufficient supply of vaccines left, even after the second dose is to be administered to those who have got the first.

7. It has been submitted on behalf of some of the intervenors that queues of ambulances are lined up outside government hospitals and such ambulances are used as make-shift hospital beds resulting in other patients in dire need of transportation being deprived thereof. Photographs of such queuing up of ambulances have appeared in several newspapers.

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8. Learned Advocate-General has assured the Court that steps are being taken to ensure that there is no such queuing up and that ambulances are not held up as additional hospital units. For such purpose, additional stretchers may be procured by government hospitals to house patients in corridors and other places available, particularly as this is a war-like situation where treatment has to be afforded to all who need the same.

9. By and large, things appear to be under control and nothing untoward has, thankfully, been reported on account of lack of oxygen or the like. However, to ensure that there is prevention of a large number of cases in future, immediate steps need to be taken to accelerate the rate of vaccination, including creating awareness among sections of people, particularly in the non-urban areas, of the need to take the vaccine to protect themselves.

10. It has also been pointed out by one of the intervenors that D.D.Medical College in Tiruvallur District, which has been closed down a few years back, still has the facilities available and with a bit

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of refurbishment and augmentation of equipment the same may be used as an additional hospital to treat Covid patients. There may be other similarly abandoned or disused places, which, with a little renovation and imagination may be modified into running units within a week or so. Every endeavour must be made by the State and even in the Union Territory to ensure that such places which may be converted into make-shift hospitals are attempted to be so done to augment the number of beds available for Covid patients.

11. As far as persons in correctional homes are concerned, the Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority and the Puducherry Legal Services Authority should immediately take up the matter with the Directors General of Police and the administration of the State and Union Territory to ensure relaxed rules as had been put in place exactly a year ago. The State Legal Services Authority and the Puducherry Legal Services Authority should also monitor the hygiene and Covid protocol and measures to treat patients at all the correctional homes.

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12. There are some murmurs regarding hefty amounts being demanded at some places for release of dead bodies. Elsewhere in the country, there are reports of persons at the crematoria demanding more money to cremate the Covid dead. The common person also feels the burden of additional cost at private hospitals when no place is available at government hospitals. In addition to the rather satisfactory work taken up by the State Government, these areas should be monitored so that the common man is not burdened any further.

The matters will next appear on 17.5.2021 at 2.15 pm.

(S.B., CJ.) (S.K.R., J.)
13.05.2021

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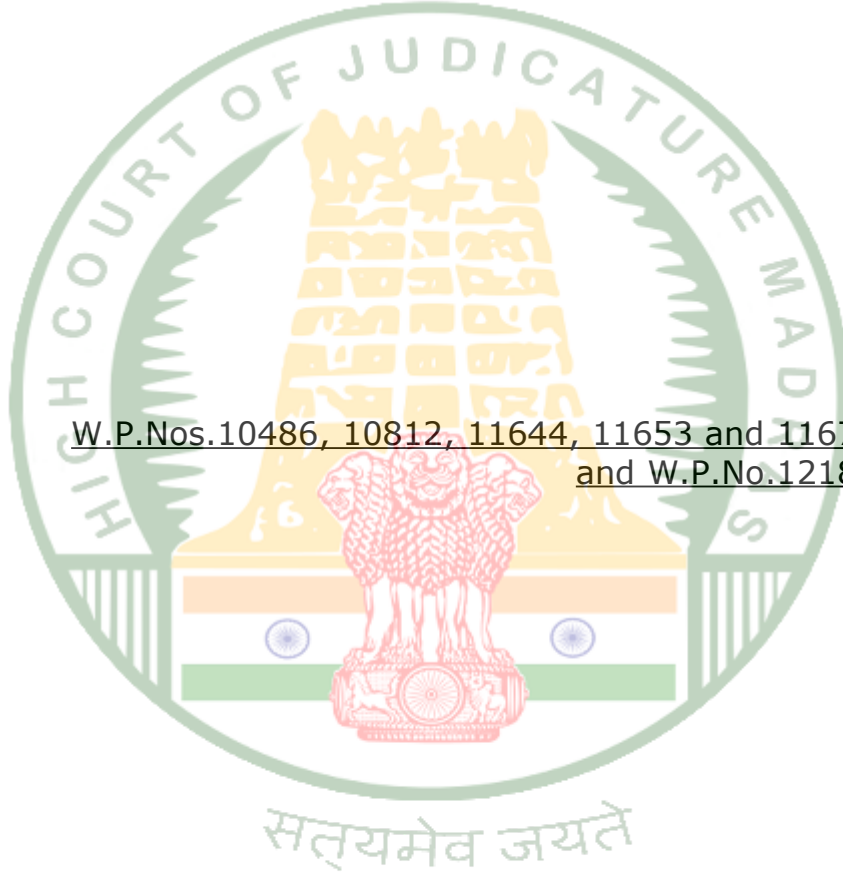
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W.P.No.10486 of 2021 etc.

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(sasi)



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