



W.P.Nos.82 and batch of 2026

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 18.03.2026

CORAM:

THE HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE P.T. ASHA

W.P.Nos.82, 139, 154, 157, 159, 165, 166, 169, 199, 209, 2285, 2293, 2301,
2307, 2173, 2188 & 2195 of 2026
& WMP.Nos.72, 73, 136, 138, 160, 162, 171, 172, 167, 170, 181, 184, 186,
189, 192, 193, 225, 228, 230, 243, 245, 2532, 2541, 2553, 2556, 2368, 2369,
2390, 2391, 2406, 2408 & 2410 of 2026

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1.R.Sadagopan Rengasamy | ...Petitioner in WP/82/2026 |
| 2.V.Jaikrishnagohilan | ...Petitioner in WP/139/2026 |
| 3.U.Senthil Kumar | ...Petitioner in WP/154/2026 |
| 4.M.Gokulakrishnan | ...Petitioner in WP/157/2026 |
| 5.S.Sivakumar | ...Petitioner in WP/159/2026 |
| 6.S.Gopalakrishnan | ...Petitioner in WP/165/2026 |
| 7.R.Abiyaa | ...Petitioner in WP/166/2026 |
| 8.N.Muthulaksham | ...Petitioner in WP/169/2026 |
| 9.V.Sankar | ... Petitioner in WP/2285/2026 |
| 10.A.Unnamalai | ... Petitioner in WP/2293/2026 |
| 11.S.Raajkumar | ... Petitioner in WP/2301/2026 |
| 12.V.Monisha | ... Petitioner in WP/2307/2026 |

-Vs-



W.P.Nos.82 and batch of 2026

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1.The National Legal Services Authority,
Represented by the Member Secretary,
B Block, Ground Floor,
Administrative Buildings Complex,
Supreme Court of India,
New Delhi – 110 001.

2.Tamilnadu State Legal Services Authority,
Represented by its Member Secretary,
North Fort Road, High Court Campus,
Chennai – 600 104.

3.The Chairman
District Legal Services Authority,
District Court Campus,
Tirunelveli.

... Respondent in WP/82 & 139/
2026

4.The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
District Court Campus,
Sivagangai.

...Respondent in WP/154/2026

5.The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
District Court Campus,
Madurai.

... Respondent in WP/157, 159,
165, 166 & 169/2026

6.The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
Coimbatore, District Court Campus,
Coimbatore – 641 018.

.. Respondent in WP/2285, 2293
2301 & 2307/2026



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W.P.Nos.199 & 209 of 2026

1.D.Karthikeyan

... Petitioner in WP/199/2026

2.Mr.A.Duraibabu

3.G.Murugan

4.P.Dhanasekaran

5.V.Nathiya

6.G.Santhiya

7.P.Kousalya

8.M.R.Jayakumar

9.B.Premkumar

10.Thilagavathi

... Petitioners in WP/209/2026

Vs.

1.Union of India,
Department of Law & Justice,
Room No. 441, A Wing,
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi.

2.The National Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
No.12/11, Jam Nagar House,
Shahjahan Road, UPSC, Man Singh Road Area,
New Delhi – 110 011.

3.The Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
North Fort Road,
High Court Campus,
Chennai – 600 104.

.. Respondents in both the WPs



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4.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Nagapattinam, Nagapattinam District.

5.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Nagapattinam, Nagapattinam District ... Respondents in WP199/2026

4.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Chengalpattu, Chengalpattu District.

5.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Chengalpattu, Chengalpattu District.

6.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/
Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Villupuram, Villupuram District.

7.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Villupuram, Villupuram District.

8.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Tiruppur, Tiruppur District.

9.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Villupuram, Villupuram District. ... Respondents in WP/209/2026

W.P.Nos.2173, 2188 & 2195 of 2026

1.D.Jagadeeswaran

2.M.Abdulsamadu ... Petitioners in WP/2173/2026



W.P.Nos.82 and batch of 2026

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1.Kamaraj

2.R.Vanitha

3.J.Sasi

4.R.Harshini

... Petitioners in WP/2188/2026

1.D.Subaramanian

... Petitioner in WP/2195/2026

Vs.

1.Union of India,
Department of Law and Justice,
Room No.441, A Wing, Shastri Bhawan,
New Delhi.

2.The National Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
No.12/11, Jam Nagar House, Shahjahan
Road, UPSC, Man Singh Road Area,
New Delhi 110 011.

3.The Tamil Nadu State Legal Service
Authority, Through its Member Secretary,
North Fort Road, High Court Campus,
Chennai 600 104.

... Respondents in all three Wps

4.The District Legal Services Authority
Through its Chairman/Principal
District and Sessions Judge, Theni,
Theni District.

5.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Secretary, Theni,
District

... Respondent in WP/2173/2026

5/20



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4.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/
Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Vellore, Vellore District.

5.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Secretary,
Vellore, Vellore District.

... Respondents in WP/2188/2026

4.The District Legal Services Authority
Through its Chairman/
Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Tiruvannamalai, Tiruvannamalai District.

5.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Tiruvannamalai,
Tiruvannamalai District.

... Respondents in WP/2195/2026

Prayer in WP/82/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notification issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA /6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd Respondent to extend the services of the petitioner as Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel, Tirunelveli.

Prayer in WP/139/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notification issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA /6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd Respondents to extend the services of the petitioner as Deputy Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Tirunelveli.



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Prayer in WP/154/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notification issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA /6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd Respondent to extend the services of the petitioner as Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Sivagangai.

Prayer in WP/157/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notifications issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and the consequential notification issued by the 3rd respondent vide Proceedings dated 19/12/2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd respondents to extend the services of the petitioner as Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Madurai.

Prayer in WP/159/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notifications issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and the consequential notification issued by the 3rd respondent vide proceedings dated 19/12/2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd respondents to extend the services of the petitioner as Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Madurai.

Prayer in WP/165/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorari, calling for the records



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relating to notification issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and the Consequential notification issued by the 3rd respondent vide proceedings dated 19.12.2025 and quash the same.

Prayer in WP/166/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notifications issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and the consequential notification issued by the 3rd respondent vide Proceedings dated 19/12/2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd respondents to extend the services of the petitioner as Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Madurai.

Prayer in WP/169/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to notifications issued by the 2nd Respondent vide No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18/12/2025 and the Consequential notification issued by the 3rd respondent vide Proceedings dated 19.12.2025 and quash the same consequentially direct the 2nd and 3rd respondents to extend the services of the petitioner as Deputy Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Madurai.

Prayer in WP/199/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the entire records relating to the issuance of the proceedings No.TNSLSA/656/S3/2025/7720 dated 18.12.2025 of the 3rd Respondent and



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the consequential Notification No.03/202025 DLSA. D.No.2516/2025 dated 20.12.2025 issued by the 4th Respondent and quash the same being contrary to the Legal Aid Defense Counsel (Modified) Scheme, 2022 issued by the 2nd Respondent and consequently direct the Respondents to continue the engagements of the Petitioners as Legal Aid Defence Counsels in their respective posts.

Prayer in WP/209/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the entire records relating to the issuance of the Proceedings No.TNSLSA/656/S3/2025/7720 dated 18.12.2025 of the 3rd Respondent and quash the same being contrary to the Legal Aid Defence Counsel (Modified) Scheme, 2022 issued by the 2nd Respondent and consequently direct the Respondents to continue the engagements of the Petitioners as Legal Aid Defense Counsels in their respective posts.

Prayer in WP/2285/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records, the impugned order issued by 2nd respondent through their proceedings in TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 DATED 18.12.2025 and quash the same and consequently direct the respondents to consider the Petitioner willingness letter dated 04.12.2025 and to extend his engagement as Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel for the year 2026, based on satisfactory performance, in accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and Clause 4 of the Modified LADCS Scheme, 2022; in the light of the law laid down by the Hon'ble High Court of Madhya Pradesh in WP.No.36687 of 2025.



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Prayer in WP/2293/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records, the impugned order issued by 2nd respondent through their proceedings in TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 DATED 18.12.2025 and quash the same and consequently direct the respondents to consider the Petitioner willingness letter dated 04.12.2025 and to extend his engagement as Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel for the year 2026, based on satisfactory performance, in accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and Clause 4 of the Modified LADCS Scheme, 2022; in the light of the law laid down by the Hon'ble High Court of Madhya Pradesh in WP.No.36687 of 2025.

Prayer in WP/2301/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records, the impugned order issued by 2nd respondent through their proceedings in TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 DATED 18.12.2025 and quash the same and consequently direct the respondents to consider the Petitioner willingness letter dated 04.12.2025 and to extend his engagement as Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel for the year 2026, based on satisfactory performance, in accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and Clause 4 of the Modified LADCS Scheme, 2022; in the light of the law laid down by the Hon'ble High Court of Madhya Pradesh in WP.No.36687 of 2025.

Prayer in WP/2307/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling



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for the records, the impugned order issued by 2nd respondent through their proceedings in TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 DATED 18.12.2025 and quash the same and consequently direct the respondents to consider the Petitioner willingness letter dated 04.12.2025 and to extend his engagement as Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel for the year 2026, based on satisfactory performance, in accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and Clause 4 of the Modified LADCS Scheme, 2022; in the light of the law laid down by the Hon'ble High Court of Madhya Pradesh in WP.No.36687 of 2025.

Prayer in WP/2173 & 2188 /2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the entires records relating to the issuance of the Proceedings No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18.12.2025 of the 3rd Respondent and quash the same being contrary to the Legal Aid Defense Counsel (Modified) Scheme, 2022 issued by the 2nd Respondent and consequently direct the Respondents to continue the engagements of the Petitioners as Legal Aid Defense Counsels in their respective posts.

Prayer in WP/2195/2026: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking for a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the entire records relating to the issuance of the Proceedings No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18.12.2025 of the 3rd Respondent and the consequential notification no.1/2026 DLSA.No.57/2026 dated 06.01.2026 issued by the 4th Respondent and quash the same being contrary to the Legal Aid Defense Counsel (Modified) Scheme, 2022 issued by the 2nd Respondent and consequently direct the Respondents to continue the



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engagements of the Petitioners as Legal Aid Defense Counsels in their respective posts.

W.P.Nos/82, 139, 154, 157, 159, 165, 166, 169/2026:

For Petitioner(s) : Mr.S.Conscious Ilango
For Respondent(s) : Mr.Suhrith Parthasarathy
for M/s.Amritha Sathyajith for R1
Mr.C.K.Chandrasekar for R2
R3 – served – No appearance

W.P.Nos.199 & 209 of 2026

For Petitioner(s) : Mr.N.Nithianandam
For Respondent(s) : Not ready in notice (R1 -WP/209/26)
No appearance (R1- WP/199/2026)
Mr.Suhrith Parthasarathy
for M/s.Amritha Sathyajith for R2
Mr.C.K.Chandrasekar for R3
R4 & R5 – served – No appearance
(WP/199/2026)
RR4 to 9 – served – No appearance
(WP/209/2026)

W.P.Nos/2285, 2293, 2301 & 2307/2026:

For Petitioner(s) : Mr.M.Silambarasan
For Respondent(s) : Mr.Suhrith Parthasarathy
for M/s.Amritha Sathyajith for R1
Mr.C.K.Chandrasekar for R2
R3 – Not ready in notice

W.P.Nos/2173, 2188 & 2195/2026:

For Petitioner(s) : Mr.N.Nithianandam
For Respondent(s) : No appearance for R1 (all 3 WPs)
Mr.Suhrith Parthasarathy
for M/s.Amritha Sathyajith for R2



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(WP/2173/26)

R2 – not ready in notice (WP/2188/26)

Mr.C.K.Chandrasekar

for R3 (in all 3 WPs)

R4 & R5 – served – no appearance

(WP/2173 & 2188/26)

R2, R4 & R5 - Not ready in notice

(WP2195/26)

COMMON ORDER

The above Writ Petitions have been filed to call for the records relating to the notification issued by the second respondent Vide No.TNSLSA/6562/S3/2025/7720 dated 18.12.2025 and to quash the same and consequently to extend the services of the petitioners as Legal Aid Defence Counsels in their respective posts.

2.The common case of all the petitioners is that all of them are advocates enrolled in the rolls of Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on various dates. The first respondent/National Legal Services Authority had introduced the Legal Aid Defence Counsel (Modified) Scheme, 2022 (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Scheme’) with an objective of strengthening the criminal legal aid system in the Country. The scheme proposes to address shortcomings in the earlier panel lawyer system, where legal aid lawyers were engaged on a case-to-case basis, while continuing private practice,



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which resulted in the advocates not being available when the case is being called, no accountability and consequently, an ineffective defence for the poor and marginalized members of the society.

3.The Scheme aims to establish a full time, professional and institutional defence mechanism on the lines of a public defender system. Under this scheme, selected advocates are required to work exclusively for legal aid, from the pre-arrest stage till the conclusion of the trial and appeal. These candidates are prohibited from engaging in private practice during the tenure of their service. In acknowledgment of their exclusive services for the legal aid, they are also paid a stipend. The selection procedure for these candidates is on a contractual basis, initially for a period of two years, with a stipulation for an extension on yearly basis, subject to their satisfactory performance.

4.The grievance of the petitioners in the instant case is that although all of them have put in satisfactory performance, they are sought to be eased out as the second respondent has decided to initiate the selection process to select the candidates for appointment as Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel and Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel



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in the place of aforementioned legal aid counsel by issuing a fresh notification and to send the selection list to the third respondent. The petitioners would submit that the scheme clearly provides that once they are engaged and their services are satisfactory, they are entitled to automatic renewal. Therefore, they sought to have the impugned order quashed.

5.The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has filed a counter denying the petitioners' contention with reference to the rights of the petitioners to continue as Legal Aid Defence Counsel (LADC's.). The NALSA would submit that the word 'yearly' has to be interpreted as "on a year to year basis" in paragraph 22 of their counter, as stated as follows;

"It is therefore submitted that the Scheme must be interpreted to mean that after the completion of the initial two-year tenure, an extension, if granted, would be limited to one year. The provision cannot be construed to imply recurring annual renewal or automatic continuation beyond the extended period. The same may be inferred from the communication dated 15.03.2024 received from Department of Justice"

6.When the matter had come up on 02.03.2026, this Court had directed the respondents to produce an evaluation of the candidates who have been appointed under the scheme in various Departments. Today, a list of 53



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LADC's whose period came to an end on 08.01.2026 was produced before this Court. A perusal of the same would show that while most of the candidates have been graded 'good' and some as 'very good', the performance of others have only been 'satisfactory' and two of them have graded as 'low performance : not-recommended'. Though the language of the scheme would indicate that persons whose performance has been satisfactory should be extended, the term 'satisfactory' therein denotes 'good' and 'very good' work and 'satisfactory' grading given to those candidates denotes 'inadequate performance', which requires to be bettered. This Court is also not inclined to agree with the argument of the learned counsel for the National Legal Services Authority that the term 'yearly' in the Scheme denotes one year. The extension on a yearly basis has to be read in conjecture with the performance. Therefore, if an LADC were to perform well, he is automatically entitled to an extension at the end of the year.

7. Therefore, the Writ Petitions are allowed with the following directions;

(i) the Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority shall automatically extend the services of all the LADC's who have been graded 'very good' and 'good'.



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(ii) The services of LADC's who have been graded 'satisfactory' and 'low performance' shall not be extended and selection can go on in the place of those candidates'.

Consequently, the connected miscellaneous petitions are closed. No costs.

18.03.2026

Tsg

To

- 1.The National Legal Services Authority,
Represented by the Member Secretary,
B Block, Ground Floor,
Administrative Buildings Complex,
Supreme Court of India,
New Delhi – 110 001.
- 2.Tamilnadu State Legal Services Authority,
Represented by its Member Secretary,
North Fort Road, High Court Campus,
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- 3.The Chairman
District Legal Services Authority,
District Court Campus,
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- 4.The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
District Court Campus,
Sivagangai.



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- 5.The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
District Court Campus,
Madurai.
- 6.The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
Coimbatore, District Court Campus,
Coimbatore – 641 018.
- 7.Union of India,
Department of Law & Justice,
Room No. 441, A Wing,
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- 8.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Nagapattinam, Nagapattinam District.
- 9.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Nagapattinam, Nagapattinam District
- 10.The District Legal Services Authority,
Though its Chairman/Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Chengalpattu, Chengalpattu District.
- 11.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Chengalpattu, Chengalpattu District.
- 12.The District Legal Services Authority,
Though its Chiarmen/
Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Villupuram, Villupuram District.
- 13.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Villupuram, Villupuram District.



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14.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Tiruppur, Tiruppur District.

15.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Villupuram, Villupuram District.

16.The District Legal Services Authority
Through its Chairman/Principal
District and Sessions Judge, Theni,
Theni District.

17.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Secretary, Theni,
District

18.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Chairman/
Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Vellore, Vellore District.

19.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Secretary,
Vellore, Vellore District.

20.The District Legal Services Authority
Through its Chairman/
Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Tiruvannamalai, Tiruvannamalai District.

21.The District Legal Services Authority,
Through its Member Secretary,
Tiruvannamalai,
Tiruvannamalai District.



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P.T. ASHA, J.

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18.03.2026