

W.P.No.13642 of 2021

THE HON'BLE CHIEF JUSTICE
and
P.D.AUDIKEVALU, J.

(Made by the Hon'ble Chief Justice)

Pursuant to the previous orders, learned Advocate-General has, at the behest of the Court, gone out of his way to convene a meeting with the relevant officials to ensure that cooked meals are reached to school-going children as expeditiously as possible since schools have closed down in the State from or about the end of March, 2020.

2. A letter dated August 3, 2021 issued by the Chief Secretary to the State Government to learned Advocate-General has been placed. A copy of such letter has been forwarded to learned advocate for the petitioner, who has brought this crucial matter to light and has ensured that the State's attention in such regard is drawn.

3. The suggestion given by the petitioner on previous occasions that local anganwadi cooking centres may be re-opened, if only to provide cooked midday meals to children in the rural and semi-urban areas, appears to have been accepted by the State. The resumption of

the supply of cooked meal with appropriate nutrient content in accordance with the National Food Security Act, 2013 is proposed to be with effect from September 1, 2021. It is submitted on behalf of the petitioner that on the basis of the plan of action indicated particularly at paragraphs II (iv) and (v) of the letter, there does not appear to be any impediment to cooked meals being reached to the children within the next 15 days. The petitioner also suggests that voluntary organisations showing willingness to deliver the cooked meals may be used for the exercise.

4. On such two suggestions put forth on behalf of the petitioner, to the effect that the programme be resumed within the next 15 days and that voluntary organisations be permitted to carry the food over the last mile, so to say, the State, understandably, has reservations. As to expediting the process, the State says that it is attempting to resume the midday meal scheme as soon as possible, but it may not be practical to direct the resumption by or around August 15, 2021 and September 1, 2021 may be the more reasonable date, though the State will make every endeavour to ensure that the supplies are resumed even earlier, if possible. The State clearly does not want voluntary organisations to carry the cooked meals for the children in

the rural or semi-urban areas and such matter is best left to the discretion of the executive.

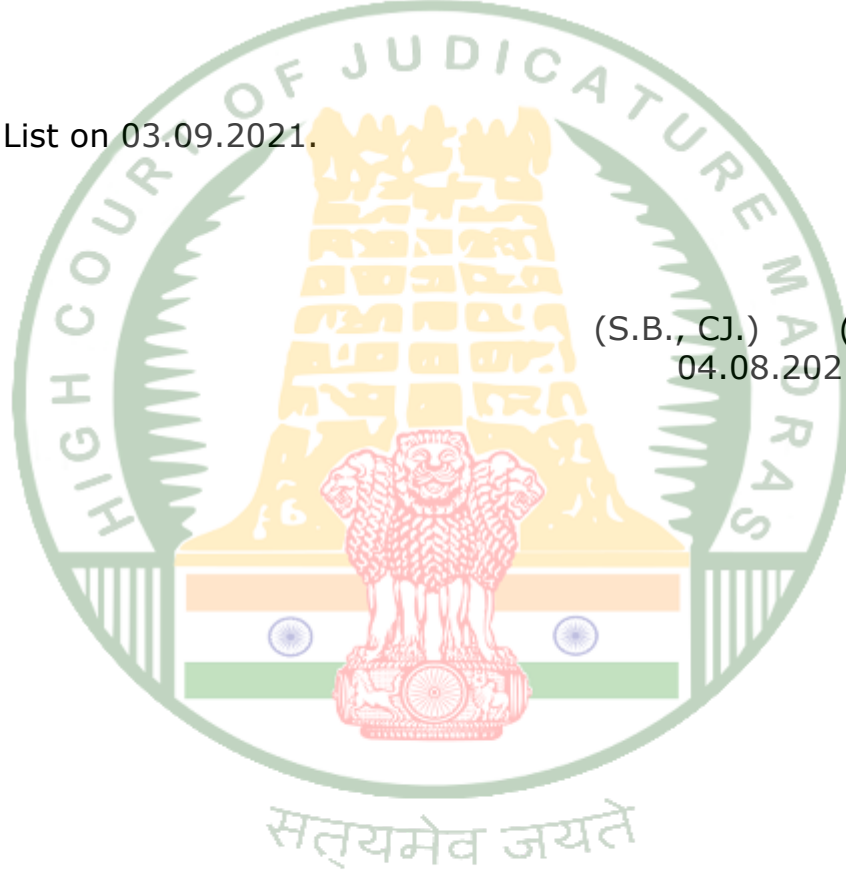
5. Indeed, it is heartening to note that the petitioner has taken such keen interest in the matter and the State has furnished details of not only how the scheme would be resumed, but has specified right down to the menu and the items that would be served, together with the calorific contents of the ingredients.

6. It is hoped that the State can ensure that the scheme is resumed as expeditiously as possible and closer to August 15, 2021 than September 1, 2021. But, considering the thought and effort that may have gone into preparing the report, there appears to be little doubt that the State is committed to the resumption; subject, however, to what the situation on the ground may be, since the State says that the second surge may have abated, but is not altogether over and there are pockets where the number of infections is rising though in the other areas the number of infections has been going down. As far as this Court is aware, the daily number of infections is hovering around the 2000 mark in the State at the moment. The figures have increased a bit after having gone down considerably.

7. The matter will appear on September 3, 2021 for the State to report whether, and to what extent, the midday meal program has been resumed. Even at this stage, the Court expresses its gratitude and appreciation to both the petitioner and learned Advocate-General.

8. List on 03.09.2021.

kpl



(S.B., CJ.) (P.D.A., J.)
04.08.2021

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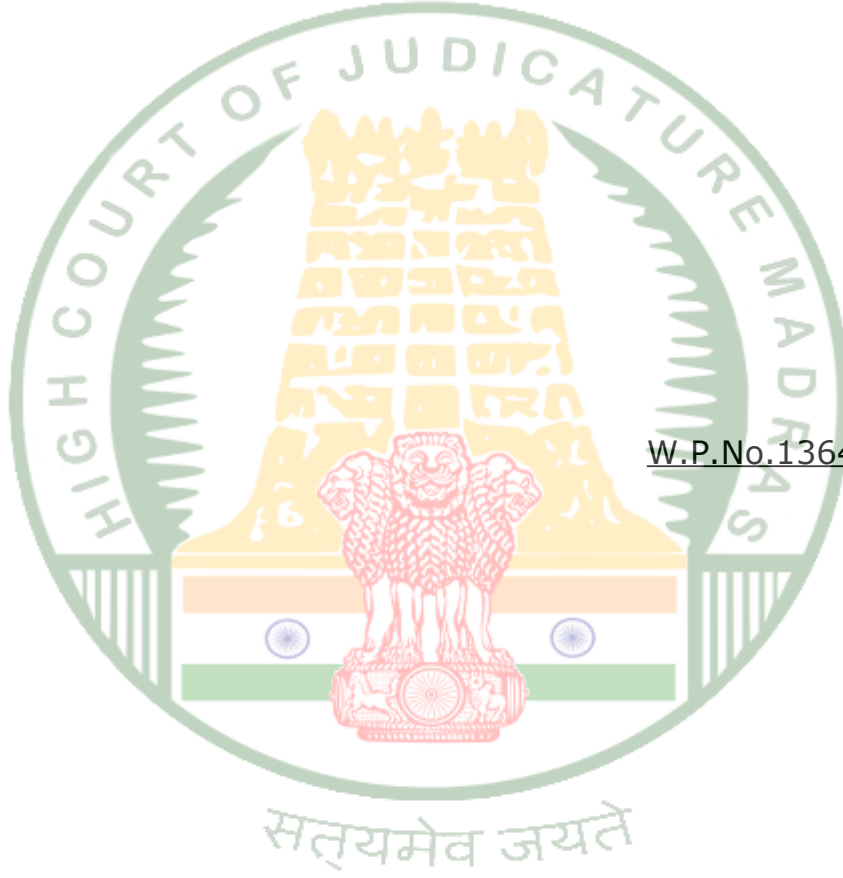
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