

## **Regarding Petroleum and Natural Gas blocks in Cauvery basin**

**SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI KARUNANIDHI (THOOTHUKUDI):** Madam, the Directorate of Hydrocarbon under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas had launched Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) bid round 10 for auctioning petroleum and natural gas blocks on 11.02.2025. It includes a block in the Cauvery Basin which falls within the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve and is near the Palk Bay.

The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve has a rich biodiversity encompassing varied ecosystems like coral reefs, sea-grass beds, mangroves, estuaries, mudflats, islands and forests. It is spread over 560 sq. kms off the coasts of Ramanathapuram and Thoothukudi districts. Also, the adjoining Palk Bay area encompasses India's first conservation reserve for Dugong Sea cows. These areas are rich in biodiversity and the proposed offshore mining activity threatens the ecology of this biodiversity rich area and the livelihood of the fishermen community living in these areas. And the auction proposal of this ecologically sensitive block was made without consulting the Tamil Nadu Government. Our Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin, had written a letter to the hon. Prime Minister requesting him to stop this bid and auctioning in order to stop the sand mining protecting this bioreserve and livelihood of our fishermen.