

THE KERALA FOREST (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

(As Passed by the Assembly on the 8th day of October, 2025)

A

BILL

further to amend the Kerala Forest Act, 1961.

Preamble.—WHEREAS, it is expedient further to amend the Kerala Forest Act, 1961 (4 of 1962) for the purposes hereinafter appearing;

BE it enacted in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. *Short title and commencement.*—(1) This Act may be called the Kerala Forest (Amendment) Act, 2025.

(2) It shall come into force at once.

2. *Amendment of section 2.*—In the Kerala Forest Act, 1961 (4 of 1962) (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act), in section 2, for clause (c), the following clause shall be substituted, namely:—

“(c) "Forest Officer" means any person appointed by name or as holding an office by or under the orders of the Government to be a Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Chief Conservator of Forests, Conservator of Forests, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Divisional Forest Officer, Wildlife Warden, Assistant Wildlife Warden, Range Forest Officer, Deputy Range Forest Officer, Section Forest Officer, Timber Depot Officer, Beat Forest Officer, Forest Beat Assistant (except for the purpose of arrest) or to discharge any function of a Forest Officer under this Act or any rule made thereunder;”.

3. *Amendment of section 47B.*—In section 47B of the principal Act, in sub-section (2),—

(a) after the words "for his own use", the words and symbols "or for sale through the Forest Department or, subject to the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder, for any other bonafide use, irrespective of the age of the tree" shall be inserted;

(b) for the existing proviso, the following proviso shall be substituted, namely:—

"Provided that the provision for sale and bonafide use under sub-section (2) shall not apply to sandal trees, if any, reserved by the Government at the time of assignment of such lands or sandal trees standing on any land notified under section 5 of the Kerala Preservation of Trees Act, 1986 (35 of 1986) or the areas notified by the custodian under the Kerala Forest (Vesting and Management of Ecologically Fragile Lands) Act, 2003 (21 of 2005).".

4. *Amendment of section 47E.*—In section 47E of the principal Act,—

(a) in the marginal heading, for the words "authorised officer", the words "Forest Department" shall be substituted;

(b) for the words "authorised officer", the words "Forest Department" shall be substituted.

5. *Amendment of section 53.*—In section 53 of the principal Act, for the word "Ranger", the words "Range Forest Officer" shall be substituted.

6. *Amendment of section 64.*—In section 64 of the principal Act, for the word "Ranger", the words "Range Forest Officer" shall be substituted.

7. *Amendment of section 68.*—In section 68 of the principal Act, for sub-section (1), the following sub-section shall be substituted, namely:—

“(1) Any Forest Officer not below the rank of an Assistant Conservator of Forests may,—

(a) accept from any person, reasonably suspected of having committed any forest offence, other than an offence punishable under section 47G, section 62 or section 65, a sum of money equivalent to the maximum fine amount prescribed for the offence under the Act or the rules made thereunder by way of compensation for the offence which may have been committed and where any property has been seized as liable to confiscation, may release the same on payment of the value thereof as estimated by such officer or confiscate such property to the Government;

(b) after institution of the prosecution, on an application from the accused, compound, with the permission of the court, any offence other than an offence punishable under section 47G, section 62 or section 65, alleged against such accused, by accepting a sum of money and value of property assessed in the manner as specified in clause (a):

Provided that though an offence has been compounded under this sub-section, it shall be deemed to be a previous commission of the same offence for the purpose of determining whether a second or subsequent offence has been committed and no such second or subsequent offence shall be compounded under this clause."
