

<https://muslimmirror.com/adivasi-groups-slam-keralas-poverty-free-declaration-urge-film-icons-to-boycott-event/>

India

# Adivasi groups slam Kerala's 'Poverty-Free Declaration', urge film icons to boycott event



By Muslim Mirror Network

November 1, 2025



Amid preparations for Kerala's official declaration of being "extreme poverty-free" on November 1, Adivasi organisations have joined ASHA workers in denouncing the move as a "politically motivated façade" that conceals the state's persistent inequalities.

In a joint statement, the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha Adishakti Summer School urged film stars Mohanlal, Mammooty, and Kamal Haasan who are scheduled to attend the event to withdraw their participation, warning that their presence could "legitimize a misleading narrative." The groups said the government's claim

of eradicating poverty ignored the harsh realities faced by Adivasis, Dalits, fisherfolk, and other marginalized groups.

They argued that Kerala's announcement, set for Kerala Formation Day (November 1), is a "public relations exercise before the elections" designed to overshadow issues like hunger, unemployment, homelessness, and malnutrition. "We continue to live without land, food security, or dignity. Declaring Kerala as poverty-free is an insult to our lived experience," the statement read.

According to government figures, around 64,000 families are still classified as "extremely poor." The Adivasi groups called these figures deceptive, noting that only 5 percent of these families are officially listed as Adivasi and 20 percent as Dalit, even though the poorest living conditions are concentrated in tribal belts like Wayanad and Attappady.

They cited alarming studies showing chronic malnutrition and anemia among tribal children and women. A 2020 study by Sabu et al. found that 59 percent of tribal children were underweight and 52.3 percent had stunted growth. Another study, published in the *International Journal of Community Medicine & Public Health* (2022), found that over half of children under five in Wayanad suffered from malnutrition.

The situation in Attappady, long infamous for infant deaths among tribal families, remains dire. A National Institute of Nutrition survey covering 20 tribal hamlets and 480 households reported that 48 percent of children were underweight, 91 percent of children and 96 percent of adolescent girls were anaemic, and 30 percent of families were landless.

The statement said the decline in agricultural jobs, especially for women, mechanisation of paddy fields, and the replacement of local labour by migrant workers had deepened deprivation. "Educated youth are unemployed, while those without education earn less than ₹157 a day below the UN's poverty benchmark and survive on ration supplies," the groups said.

They added that Dalits, fishers, and plantation workers continue to suffer poor wages and lack of social protection. ASHA workers, who earn around ₹233 per day, have also opposed the government's celebration, saying it mocks those still living in poverty.

The Adivasi organisations accused the government of "erasing the lived pain of marginalised people" to claim international recognition for meeting UN Sustainable Development Goals like "No Poverty" and "Zero Hunger."

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, however, has hailed the declaration as a "historic achievement," asserting that Kerala will become India's first state to eliminate extreme poverty. The event, to be attended by top film icons, is intended to showcase the state's welfare policies.

But activists insist that real progress cannot be declared through ceremonies. “If the government wants to celebrate, let it first ensure that no Adivasi child goes hungry, no Dalit woman sleeps on the roadside, and no worker earns below a living wage,” the statement concluded.

