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**Kerala**

## Adivasi group calls Kerala's 'extreme poverty-free' claim a deception

*Accusing the Kerala government of using film stars for political optics, the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha has appealed to Mohanlal, Mammooty, and Kamal Haasan to withdraw from the November 1 "poverty-free" declaration event, calling it an election gimmick.*



M Geethanandan, State Coordinator of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha speaking at press meet

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The Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha, a tribal-rights organisation, has urged film stars not to attend the Kerala government's November 1 event declaring the state "extreme

poverty-free,” echoing a similar appeal made earlier by Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) volunteers. The government has planned to invite actors Mohanlal, Mammootty, and Kamal Haasan for the event.

In a statement titled “Declaration of Extreme Poverty Eradication is an Election Strategy; Film Stars Must Withdraw,” the Gothra Sabha said the government’s plan to involve the film stars was aimed at gaining public acceptance ahead of the elections.

“The declaration is a deception. It conceals the genuine living conditions of a large section of the poor in Kerala,” the Sabha said. It accused the government of trying to cheat hundreds of poor people by using film stars, “who have not studied the issues of the impoverished, to front the announcement.”

Calling on the actors to withdraw from the event, the statement warned that the November 1st declaration, “for the sake of cheap political games”, is obscuring the real picture of poverty and deprivation in the state.

The organisation also challenged the government’s claim that only 64,000 families were “extremely vulnerable.”

“Of these (64,000 families), only 5% are Adivasis (Tribals), 20% are Dalits, and 75% are from other communities. A cursory glance shows that these figures are false,” the Gothra Mahasabha claimed.

Citing data from Wayanad and Attappadi, the Sabha said that the vast majority of Paniya, Adiya, Kattunaikka, and Vettakuruma people are landless, homeless, and unemployed, with many families living in makeshift shelters and suffering from malnutrition and diseases like sickle cell anaemia.

Quoting from studies, the statement noted that a 2022 study published in the LUCMPH found that 54.8% of children under five were malnourished and that 48% of children in Attappadi were underweight while 91% suffered from anaemia.

It further argued that poverty in Kerala was tied to the loss of agricultural employment, especially for women, and that many did not even receive the Rs 157 per day minimum wage estimated by the United Nations.

“A study conducted by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) (focusing on 20 hamlets, 480 houses, 523 children, 40 pregnant women, and 110 lactating mothers) found that 48% of children were underweight and 40% were stunted. 91% of children, 96% of adolescent girls, and 80% of pregnant women suffer from anaemia (blood deficiency). 10% of these families are landless,” the statement said.

The Sabha said the declaration would allow the government to shirk its responsibility to implement projects that solve real poverty, and demanded a comprehensive survey of the social and economic backwardness of various vulnerable communities and a plan to address it.

The letter, dated October 28, 2025, was signed by M Geethanandan, State Coordinator of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha, along with Reshma KR, Manikandan C, Jishnu G, and Rameshan Koyalippura.