

---

---

**THE KERALA FOREST (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025**

---

---

©  
Kerala Legislature Secretariat  
2025

**THE KERALA FOREST (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025**

**THE KERALA FOREST (AMENDMENT) BILL, 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, Watcher or to discharge any function of a Forest Officer under this Act or any rules 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 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 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 subsection, 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."

## STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Government have decided to relax the restrictions for cutting sandal trees from private lands and grant permission to the land owners to sell their sandal trees through the Forest Department other than those reserved to Government during assignment of such land and those in the notified areas under the Kerala Preservation of Trees Act 1986 (35 of 1986) and the Kerala Forest (Vesting and Management of Ecologically Fragile Lands) Act, 2003 (21 of 2005) so as to promote planting of sandal trees.

2. At present, there is no provision in the Act to compound a forest offence after the institution of the prosecution. Government have therefore decided to incorporate provisions in the Act to compound certain offences with the permission of the Court.

3. The Government have also decided to amend the definition of "Forest Officer" so as to include certain categories of officers and to exclude the categories of officers which do not exist as of now.

4. The Bill seeks to achieve the above object.

## FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

The Bill, if enacted and brought into operation, would not involve any additional expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State.

A. K. SASEENDRAN.



sandalwood oil surrendered under section 47D, the authorised officer shall pay the price thereof at the rates, as may be fixed by the Government from time to time.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

53. *Power to release property seized under section 52.*—Any Forest Officer of a rank not inferior to that of a Ranger, who or whose subordinate has seized any tools, boats, vehicles or cattle under the provisions of section 52, may release the same on the execution by the owner thereof a bond for the production of the property so released, if and when so required before the Magistrate having jurisdiction to try the offence on account of which the seizure has been made.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

64. *Power to release on bonds persons arrested under section 63.*—Any Forest Officer of a rank not inferior to that of a Ranger who or whose subordinates have arrested any person under the provisions of section 63 may release such person on bail on his executing a bond to appear, if and when so required, before the Magistrate having jurisdiction in the case, or before the Officer-in-charge of the nearest Police Station.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

68. *Power to compound offences.*—(1) Any Forest Officer not below the rank of an Assistant Conservator of Forests may accept from any person, reasonably suspected of having committed any forest offence other than an offence under section 62 or section 65, a sum of money 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.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*