

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM
PRESENT
THE HONOURABLE DR. JUSTICE A.K.JAYASANKARAN NAMBIAR
&
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE JOBIN SEBASTIAN

Friday, the 13th day of March 2026 / 22nd Phalguna, 1947
WP(C) NO. 7858 OF 2025(S)

PETITIONER:

BAIJU PAUL MATHEWS, AGED 52 YEARS, PUTHUSSERIL,
KOTTAKUNNU, SULTHAN BATHERY, WAYANAD, PIN - 673 592

RESPONDENTS:

1. STATE OF KERALA, REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, FOREST AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 001
2. STATE OF KERALA, REPRESENTED BY CHIEF SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 001
3. THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR, KANNUR, COLLECTORATE, KANNUR, PIN - 670 001
4. THE WILDLIFE WARDEN, THE WILDLIFE WARDEN, IRITTY, KANNUR, PIN - 670 703
ADDITIONAL R5 TO R7 IMPEADED
5. ANERT, PMG – LAW COLLEGE ROAD, VIKAS BHAVAN P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 033, REPRESENTED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.
6. ARALAM GRAMA PANCHAYAT, REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, MALABAR HILL HIGHWAY, NEAR ARALAM WILD LIFE SANCTUARY, PAYAM, EDOOR, KERALA - 670 704.
7. ARALAM FARMING CORPORATION (KERALA) LIMITED, REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, ARALAM FARM, KANNUR DISTRICT, KERALA – 670 673.
*ADDL. R5 TO R7 ARE SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS PER ORDER DATED 27/06/2025 IN WP(C) 7858/2025.
ADDITIONAL R8 IMPEADED
8. THE TRIBAL REHABILITATION DEVELOPMENT MISSION, REPRESENTED BY THE DIRECTOR, SC/ST DEPARTMENT, AYYANKALI BHAVAN, KOWDIAR P.O, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 003.
ADDL.R8 IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS PER ORDER DATED 06/08/2025 IN WP(C) 7858/2025.

ADDITIONAL R9 IMPEADED

9. THE CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN, FOREST HEADQUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 014.
ADDL. R9 IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS PER ORDER DATED 17/12/2025 IN WP(C) 7858/2025.

Writ petition (civil) praying inter alia that in the circumstances stated in the affidavit filed along with the WP(C) the High Court be pleased to issue following Interim reliefs:

1. Short-Term Defensive Mechanisms

- Directing the Respondent R3 and R4 to immediately restore and maintain the electric fencing in all critical blocks, with 24x7 watchers or rapid-response squads deployed until a permanent boundary wall and translocation can be effected.
- Ensure that shrubs are trimmed periodically, and small trees cut to ensure visibility and reduce places where elephants can hide.
- Mandating timely repairs and maintenance of any half-built or damaged portions of the boundary wall, in line with the Minister's assurance.

2. Temporary Relocation if Needed

- In the event that short-term defense measures cannot be fully secured forthwith, temporarily relocate the most vulnerable families to government quarters (e.g., PWD guest houses) with a daily sustenance allowance, until the farmland is rendered safe. Direct respondent 2 for the same.

3. Immediate Elephant-Drive Operations

- Compel the Respondent R4 to chase away or drive out elephants from the settlement area as an interim measure, pending a comprehensive translocation plan.

This petition again coming on for admission upon perusing the petition and the affidavit filed in support of WP(C), this Court's order dated 02/03/2026 and upon hearing the arguments of SRI. BAIJU PAUL MATHEWS as Party-In-Person for the petitioner, SRI.K.GOPALAKRISHNA KURUP, ADVOCATE GENERAL for R1 to R4, M/S. T.R.HARIKUMAR & ARJUN RAGHAVAN, Advocates for R5, SRI. NIRMAL.S, STANDING COUNSEL for R6 and of SRI. V.HARISH, Advocate for R7, the court passed the following:

P.T.0

DR. A.K.JAYASANKARAN NAMBIAR, J.
&
JOBIN SEBASTIAN, J.

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Dated this the 13th day of March, 2026

ORDER

Dr. A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar, J.

Pursuant to our last order, a report has been submitted by the Chief Secretary, wherein, the details of the road maps that put in place a robust defence mechanism for dealing with human-wild animal conflict situations in Aralam and Wayanad have been provided. The summary of the road map aforementioned for Aralam Farm and TRDM re-settlement area reads as follows:

**ROADMAP FOR ESTABLISHING A ROBUST DEFENCE MECHANISM
FOR HANDLING HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT (HWC) – ARALAM**

BRIEF SUMMARY FOR QUICK REFERENCE

WP(C) No. 7858/2025 | Order dated 02.03.2026 | March 2026

CONTEXT

Aralam TRDM (1,542 Ha) houses ~1,992 tribal families adjacent to Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary (5,500 Ha). The area sits in a historic elephant corridor. 15 fatalities in a decade; most recent: Sri. Aneesh A.S. (27.02.2026). HWC declared a State-specific disaster. The Hon'ble High Court has directed a comprehensive roadmap.

Three-Pillar Strategy: A. Physical Barriers | B. Behavioural Change | C. Forest Habitat Improvement | Addressing Tribal Welfare & Livelihood

SECTION A: PHYSICAL BARRIER – CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE

Key Action	Lead Agency	Timeline	Priority
Complete 9.89 km Elephant Proof Wall (EPW). Resolve quarry supply, pole shifting, road realignment hindrances.	PWD (execution); Revenue; KSEB; PMGSY	May 2026	CRITICAL
Maintain 4.4 km solar fencing (Parippthod-Kottapara). Clear 3m undergrowth strip; replace 303 hazard trees.	TRDM; ANERT	22–31 Mar 2026	CRITICAL
Install additional 3.5 km + 5 km solar hanging fencing in EPW-incomplete stretches.	ANERT (install); TRDM (maintain)	3 weeks + per agreement	HIGH
AI-based Early Warning System with Keltron & Forest Dept.	KSDMA	8 months	HIGH
Integrated Fence Power Monitoring with Task Force, NGOs, Aapda Mitra.	DDMA; ASAP	6 months	HIGH
Expand wildlife repeller devices and thermal drone/camera-trap surveillance.	Forest Department	3 months (expansion)	MEDIUM

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SECTION B: BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE & REIMAGINING HABITATION

Key Action	Lead Agency	Timeline	Priority
Complete 96 acres undergrowth clearance in Blocks 7, 9, 10, 11, 13 + remaining 50 ha Forest-sanctioned clearance.	TRDM; DFO Kannur	22 Mar – 15 Apr 2026	CRITICAL
Biannual clearance plan for all roads and settlement areas. Utilise MGNREGS and Aralam Farm.	TRDM; Aralam Farm Corp.	Plan: Apr 2026; Cycle: Apr & Oct yearly	HIGH
Remove thick forest patches (Wayanadan Kaadu, Vattakaadu, Odachal, 18-Acre).	TRDM; LSGIs; Forest Dept.	Priority: Apr 2026; Full: Jun 2026	HIGH
Phase out elephant-attractant crops (cashew, jackfruit, banana). Promote ginger, turmeric, chilly, citrus.	TRDM; Agriculture Dept.	Plan: Apr 2026; Phased: 12–18 months	HIGH
Strengthen PRTs (15 teams, 63 members) and 29 Jana Jagratha Samithis . Integrate	Forest Dept.; DDMA	Training: Apr 2026; Ongoing	MEDIUM

Key Action	Lead Agency	Timeline	Priority
Aapda Mitra volunteers.			
Voluntary relocation from chronically high-risk blocks (Block 13, 9 etc.) - only with stakeholder consultation and consensus	TRDM; SC/ST DD	Plan: May 2026; Phased: 12 months	MEDIUM

* Further inputs for community engagement and reimagined settlement planning to be incorporated.

SECTION C: MAKING FOREST MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR WILDLIFE

Key Action	Lead Agency	Timeline	Priority
Mission Food, Fodder & Water: Maintain check dams (3 + 27 brushwood); expand weed removal (8 ha done; target 20 ha/yr).	Forest Dept. (Aralam WL Division)	Continuous; annual cycle	HIGH
Habitat connectivity: Map elephant corridors; channel movement to safe zones; coordinate with crop removal plan.	Forest Dept.; TRDM	Mapping: Jun 2026	HIGH
Butterfly Village DPR: Ecotourism model with butterfly garden, research centre, floriculture, organic farming.	Forest Dept.; TRDM; Tourism	DPR: Jun 2026; Infra: 24 months	MEDIUM
Comprehensive habitat management plan for Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary.	Forest Dept. (CWW)	Plan: Jun 2026; Phased: 24 months	MEDIUM

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SECTION D: TRIBAL COMMUNITY – CIVIC AMENITIES & LIVELIHOOD

Key Action	Lead Agency	Timeline	Priority
Tanker water supply (30,000 L/day via GPS-fitted lorries). Rs. 45 lakh from SDRF sanctioned.	Aralam GP; TRDM; DC	Ongoing till pipe supply	CRITICAL
KWA piped supply from Kanichar (11 MLD) via Bavali River crossing. 0.5 LL sump + 1 LL tank. ~Rs. 5 Cr additional.	KWA; TRDM; KSEB	7–10 months (250 houses in 4 months)	CRITICAL
Long-term KIIIFB WSS to Peravoor & adjoining panchayats (22 MLD WTP). Tender approved 23.02.2026.	KWA; KIIIFB	~2 years (early 2028)	MEDIUM
Road infrastructure: PMGSY road improvement and realignment.	PMGSY; TRDM	Realignment: Mar 2026	HIGH
Safety lighting: Expand LED/solar street lights in forest fringe areas.	Forest Dept.; TRDM; GP	Identification: Apr 2026; Install: 3 months	MEDIUM
Livelihood diversification: Floriculture, organic farming, ecotourism, spice cultivation with market linkages.	TRDM; Agriculture; Tourism	Plan: Jun 2026; Phased: 18–24 months	HIGH

* Further inouts for healthcare. education. and social welfare to be incorporated.

SECTION E: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK & MONITORING

Mechanism	Status / Action	Frequency
District Level HWC Monitoring Committee (GO 12/2024/F&WLD)	6 meetings held (May 2025–Jan 2026). Multi-departmental.	Monthly
DFOCs (Kannur & Aralam Divisions) coordinating with DEOC	Operational 24/7. Upgrade with SDMA funds.	Continuous
Incident Response Teams (IRTs) per NDMA mandate	To be formed in each wildlife division. Rs. 3 lakh/yr from SDRF per IC.	Form by Apr 2026
RRT Strengthening: Permanent (Block-13) + Temporary (Valayanchal). New 4WD vehicle delivered.	Equipment procurement nearing completion. Operation Gajamukuthi ongoing.	Continuous

PHASED TIMELINE AT A GLANCE

Phase	Key Deliverables	Target
IMMEDIATE	Quarry supply resolved; poles shifted; road realigned; 96-acre clearance done; tanker supply ongoing; worker safety ensured.	15–31 March 2026
SHORT-TERM	EPW completed; additional solar fencing (8.5 km) done; crop substitution plan ready; Jalandihi rehabilitation started; IRT formed.	Apr–Jun 2026
MEDIUM-TERM	KWA piped water from Kanichar operational; AI early warning live; fence monitoring integrated; crop substitution underway; Butterfly Village DPR ready.	Jul 2026–Mar 2027
LONG-TERM	KIIIFB water supply scheme complete; Butterfly Village operational; habitat management sustained; livelihood diversification embedded; institutional consolidation.	2027–2028

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Similarly, the summary of the road map for Wayanad reads as follows:

8. SUMMARY TIMELINE

Phase	Key Deliverables	Target
IMMEDIATE (March–April 2026)	Commence 8 KIIFB hanging fencing projects (South Wayanad). Execute MoUs for NABARD projects. Re-tender failed MLA fund projects. Allocate Rs. 1 Cr contingency to DC. Enforce night travel restrictions. Issue estate maintenance notices.	March–April 2026
SHORT-TERM (May–August 2026)	Complete KIIFB and ongoing hanging fencing works. Phase 1 vista clearance (119 km across North Wayanad). Street lights at 17 tribal settlements. Waste management drives. Wild boar protocol operationalised. Aapda Mitra training. First inter-state coordination meeting.	May–August 2026
MEDIUM-TERM (2026–27)	Complete NABARD fencing projects. Tribal settlement protection (phased). Integrated Command Centre operational. All technological equipment procured and deployed. Invasive weed eradication (first phase). Livelihood diversification plan. Enhanced scaring watcher deployment (Oct–Dec). Compensation streamlining.	By March 2027
LONG-TERM (2027–29)	Complete 12 km new trenches, 4.50 km new EPW, 60 km new hanging fence, 16 km new solar fence, 5.50 km stone-pitched trench. Establish Animal Hospice units. Sustained habitat restoration inside forests. Inter-state protocol institutionalised. Livelihood diversification embedded.	By March 2029

2. The administrative mechanisms that have been put in place by the State Government to handle human-wild animal conflict situations have been enumerated as follows in the report of the Chief Secretary:

“20) Administrative mechanisms are in place to handle HWC.

(i) Human-wildlife conflict was declared as a "State Specific Disaster" by the State Government vide GO (Ms) No.4/2024/DMD dated 07.03.2024.

(ii) The State Government vide GO (Ms.) 12/2024/F& WLD dated 07.03.2024 has constituted three tier committees to coordinate activities at the State, Districts and Local Levels.

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- (iii) GO (Rt) No.304/2025/DMD dated 9-5-2025 revised the norms of Relief Assistance from SDRF.
- (iv) GO (Rt) No.287/2025/DMD dated 3-5-2025 provided for the establishment of Tool Rooms for Rapid Response Teams of Forests & Wildlife (Rs.3 crores).
- (v) GO (Rt) No.265/2025/DMD dated 23-4-2025 provided for Rapid Response Vehicle for Chief Veterinary Surgeon of the Forests & Wildlife Department (Rs.1.34 crores).
- (vi) GO (Rt) No.251/2025/DMD dated 19-4-2025 enabled the establishment of State and Divisional Forest EOCs (Rs.3.72 crores).
- (vii) The Government vide GO (Rt) No.171/2025/F&WLD dated 26-4-2025 constituted a district level HWC control committee.
- (viii) Rapid Response Teams (RRTs), Primary Response Teams (PRTs), Jana Jagratha Samithies (JSS) have helped community participation. Under the DDMA - Inter Agency Group mechanism NGOs, CBOs and farmer associations can be roped in for greater participatory management of HWC.
- (ix) The Incident Response Teams (IRTs) and Incident Response System (IRS) for HWC as mandated by NDMA will be put in place. IRTs would be formed in wildlife divisions.
- (x) Maintenance and integrated remote monitoring mechanisms for all barriers (especially solar fences) will also be reviewed periodically as these are the first line of defence at the human-animal interface at the forest fringes.
- (xi) Technology validation and adoption to combat HWC will also be a focus area to stay abreast with the advancements in science and technology and leverage them in the best possible manner.
- (xii) Necessary DM funds shall be placed at the disposal of DDMA Wayanad and DDMA Kannur for maintenance of barrier assets and emergency HWC - DM operations."

3. As regards the directions in our last order with regard to the arrangements made for supply of drinking water to the residents in the TRDM area in Aralam, it is stated as follows in the report of the Chief Secretary:

"19) The Disaster Management (A) Department vide G.O (Rt)No.77/2026/DMD dated 10-02-2026 had sanctioned an amount of Rs.45,00,000/- (Rupees Forty five lakh only) to District Collector, Kannur for the supply of drinking water at TRDM Area, Aralam. Secretary, Aralam GP has informed that distribution of water was commenced on 25.02.2026 through GPS fitted tanker lorries. Two lorries each having a capacity of 5000 litres are engaged three trips per day, i.e. 30,000 litres are distributed every day. It has been informed by the Secretary, Aralam GP that on an average of 100 litres of water per head/per family is being distributed on alternative days. During the period of nine days from 25.02.2026 to 05.03.2026, a total quantity of 2,70,000

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litres of drinking water has been distributed. The supply of drinking water is being monitored by the Committee comprising of the ward member, TRDM Management, ST promoters of TRDM. ST promoters accompany the tankers for the on-the-spot monitoring of water supply.

Further, the Local Self Government Department has issued a common Government Order permitting the LSGIs to spend from their own fund for the supply of water in tanker upto May, 2026. As per this Government Order, the Grama panchayats, Municipalities Corporations can spend an amount of Rupees 6 lakhs, 12 lakhs and 13 lakhs respectively up to 31.03.2026 and Rupees 12 lakhs, 17 lakhs and 22 lakhs during the period 01.04.2026 to 31.05.2026 from their own funds for the supply of water where there is shortage of water and water is not supplied by Kerala Water Authority or other agencies under, Jal Jeevan Mission, Jalanidhi, Swajaldhara, etc."

Post this case on 22.05.2026 for ascertaining the progress of the initiatives taken by the State Government.



Sd/-
DR. A.K.JAYASANKARAN NAMBIAR
JUDGE

Sd/-
JOBIN SEBASTIAN
JUDGE

prp/13/3/26