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Kerala Inducts First-Ever Tribal Representatives Onto Its State Wildlife Board

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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Kerala Inducts First-Ever Tribal Representatives Onto Its State Wildlife Board

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

Kerala inducted **Raman Raja Mannan**, a traditional leader of the **Mannan community**, and **Vinod**, a researcher from the **Cholanaikkan community** of Nilambur, onto the state's **State Board for Wildlife**, marking the first time tribal representatives have joined the CM-chaired statutory body.

WHAT HAPPENED

The induction was announced during “**Oorunarvu**,” a Kerala Forest Department outreach programme for tribal communities held at **Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady**. Alongside the wildlife-board appointments, the state announced it will submit a **Rs 50-crore ecotourism proposal** to the Centre for the Periyar landscape, including **Rs 20 crore** for restoring the long-stalled tiger museum at Thekkady.

THE INSTITUTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The **State Board for Wildlife**, chaired by the Chief Minister, is the **apex** advisory body constituted under **Section 6 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** to guide state-level wildlife conservation policy, review protected-area management, and advise on species-protection measures. Section 6 itself requires that at least **two of the Board's ten nominated members be representatives of Scheduled Tribes**, so the statutory mandate for tribal representation has existed since the Act's inception; Kerala's announcement marks the **first time the state has actually exercised that provision**, rather than the creation of a wholly new representational category. The distinction matters for policy: a long-standing legal **entitlement** had gone unfilled in practice, and its activation now formally recognises indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge as a legitimate input into wildlife-policy formulation, rather than treating tribal communities solely as subjects of forest-department outreach or welfare programmes.

LINKAGE TO THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006

The move sits alongside India's broader, still-uneven implementation of the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**, which recognises individual and community forest rights, including rights to protect, manage and conserve community forest resources

based on traditional practices. Formal representation on a wildlife-policy body is a governance-level complement to these statutory forest rights: it gives tribal communities a voice in shaping the rules under which their traditional practices intersect with formal conservation law, rather than only a set of rights to assert after policy is already made.

FROM WELFARE FRAMING TO RIGHTS-BASED INCLUSION

Conservation governance in India has historically treated tribal and forest-dwelling communities primarily as beneficiaries of welfare schemes or as populations to be resettled from protected areas, a framing repeatedly criticised for excluding communities whose traditional knowledge of local ecology, seasonal patterns, medicinal flora and human-wildlife conflict management often exceeds that available through formal scientific surveys alone. Kerala's move is a small but symbolically significant shift toward a participatory model, treating tribal representatives as co-authors of conservation policy rather than only its subjects, a model increasingly discussed internationally under frameworks like the Convention on Biological Diversity's recognition of Indigenous and Local Communities' role in biodiversity conservation.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: Tribal communities and their traditional ecological knowledge; participatory governance models for indigenous populations.

GS Paper 3: Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the State Board for Wildlife's statutory role; the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and community forest resource rights; participatory conservation models.

Mains angle: "Formal wildlife-policy institutions have historically excluded the traditional ecological knowledge of forest-dwelling tribal communities. Discuss how participatory representation, such as tribal membership on State Wildlife Boards, can strengthen conservation outcomes." (250 words)

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

KERALA WILDLIFE BOARD TRIBAL INDUCTION:

New members: Raman Raja Mannan (Mannan community) and Vinod (Cholanaikkan community, Nilambur)

Announced at “Oorunarvu” programme, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady

Kerala’s State Board for Wildlife is chaired by the Chief Minister

Statutory basis: Section 6, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; requires at least 2 of 10 nominated members to be Scheduled Tribe representatives, a provision Kerala had not previously exercised

ACCOMPANYING ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Rs 50-crore ecotourism proposal (to be submitted to the Centre) for the Periyar landscape

Rs 20-crore restoration of the long-stalled tiger museum at Thekkady

Sources: PIB, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, The Hindu

Source: Kerala Inducts First-Ever Tribal Representatives Onto Its State Wildlife Board — [Ujjayari.com](https://ujjayari.com) | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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