

## **Green Development Agenda (Manifesto) for the existence of Kerala**

India, it is claimed, made tremendous economic growth since independence as the GDP has grown from 3% to 9% during 1950 to 2009, although fluctuating between 4% and 8% since then. Increased number of millionaires from 1,53,000 of 2011 to 1,82,000 of 2015, and, billionaires from 54 to 90 during the same period; increase in the number of cars from one lakh to 400 lakhs during 1950 to 2010; registered vehicles from 3,06,000 to 11,49,51,000 during the same period and, the increasing number of concrete structures in the cities, flyovers and over bridges; urban conglomerations of buildings are often cited as manifestations of development. Conveniently forgetting the 426 lakhs people living in the urban slums, 276 lakhs houseless people, and annual death of 21 lakhs children below the age five due to diarrhea, typhoid, malaria, and such other diseases. Also, it may be noted that 30% people are below poverty line. It is rather shameful that even after 69 years of independence, 67% of the Indians do not have a toilet. Above all, when we proudly declare that we have become one of the developed nations in the world, 2,16,500 farmers have committed suicide in the same country during 1997 to 2009.

The development paradigm that we followed has left indubitable impacts on natural resources, environment, human health and social structure. Our forests, mangroves, coastal ecosystems, riverine ecosystems and wetlands have dwindled; water became scarce in most parts; paddy land has dwindled in Kerala at an alarming rate, from 8.75 lakh ha in 1975 to just 1.94 lakhs ha in 2015. That too, when we produce hardly 6 lakhs tones/year against the requirement of 40 lakh tones every year. On the whole, our air, water, soil and food have been polluted by industries and chemical farming.

It is in this context the environmentally conscious organizations and individuals of Kerala came together under one umbrella, namely Kerala Paristhithi Aikyavedi and, picked up the experts working in various fields and prepared a Guide for Green Development of Kerala putting before the Government for a sustainable development. The document deals with 17 major sectors of development that matter the people at large and suggest methods to deal with each in a sustainable, environment-friendly way. It was handed over to the Chief Minister and other Ministers on 12 September 2012 in Trivandrum at a seminar organized for giving the outlines for Green Development.

Unfortunately it did not make any dent in the age old development paradigm. As a result, Kerala has been a silent, at times violent, spectator of a 'development cult' for the last few years that lead to a sordid scene of despair in the socio - economic, cultural and above all environmental scenario. A rapid erosion of sand below its feet! Our life-supporting systems have been drained dangerously, quite unmindful of its consequences that never happened ever before (a list of violations and omissions made on the environment of the State is annexed).

Therefore, we present a **green agenda** for the political parties to include in their election manifesto with a request to govern the State for its people and their life-supporting systems - biodiversity, ecology, and environment.

## **The Green Agenda**

The agenda for development for any political party should be based on ecological wisdom, social justice, grass-root democracy and non-violence, as the very existence of the people depends on natural resources, environment and ecology. Therefore every attempt should be made to increase productivity of the natural resources, utilise them in a sustainable manner reaching the benefit of development to every citizen equitably. Towards this, we demand the following:

1. Define the objective of development as ***“ensuring clean air, water, soil, and food; a house to live, job security, basic education, basic health protection, social and cultural security, and energy security for every citizen”***
2. Formulate a policy, strategy and action plan for sustainable development based on the objectives of development defined above, with an overall objective of ensuring a pristine environment and happiness to every citizen.
3. Bring out a white paper within three months on the environmental scenario and revisit the orders of the previous government and cancel them if they are against the people, ecology and environment
4. Commission an environmental audit to bring out the extent of compliance/violation of environmental and legal provisions and norms by the Local self-governments and various departments of the Government. Publish the report within one year
5. Put out on the website all the orders of the government, especially those made on environment and development

6. All decisions of the Cabinet meetings should be put on the Website within two days of finalizing for ensuring accountability and transparency
7. Publish the data bank as stipulated in the State Paddy and Wetlands Conservation Act 2008 at the earliest and make it available to people for verification and finalize and put on the website within six months. Till then no transactions on these lands should be permitted.
8. Wetlands and paddy lands reclaimed after the introduction of the 2008 Act should be recovered and restored.
9. Make amendments to the wetland and paddy land Act of 2008, including paddy land in the definition of wetlands and, giving a definition for the **public purpose** mentioned under reclamation of wetland
10. No new land for industries should be allowed till all the land allotted for industries are utilized, and in no circumstances wetlands and other critical ecologically sensitive habitats should be allotted for development purposes
11. All requests for land should be online and made available in the website
12. Paddy lands should be declared as Paddy Reserves and shall never be converted for any other purpose
13. Agricultural land should not be utilized for any non-agricultural practices
14. An act for protecting the hills in the non-forest area should be enacted within six months
15. An independent set up to be called "Mining Resource Expert Committee" may be constituted with experts drawn from various institutions of the State, independent experts working with various NGOs of repute and representatives of local communities to assess the availability and extractability in terms of environmental implications.
16. Constitute District level Environment Impact Assessment Committee for monitoring the mining operations
17. Eco-restoration of the catchments of hydro power and irrigation projects to improve their life span and performance
18. Declare Sand Holidays in over-mined rivers for the next five years
19. Commission a socio - economic, cultural and environment assessment of the Vallarpadam terminal within one year - a cumulative impact of the project, evaluating the environmental cost
20. Commission a cumulative Impact assessment, covering socio-economic, cultural and environmental impact of the Vizhinjam

- project, bringing out fully the environmental cost, and balance them with the proposed gain
21. Institute a social audit of the Pollution Control Board consisting of public hearing in areas having major environmental issues
  22. Commission an environment audit for the last thirty years in the Western Ghats, midlands and coastal areas to assess the environmental scenario and the development achievements
  23. Investors for industries should be promoted for meeting the State's requirements and not to satisfy the investors interest alone
  24. Implement the Kerala state organic farming policy in letter and spirit and ensure that all food crops in Kerala are under organic farming within four years and the cash crops within eight years
  25. Production and use of pesticides in the state should be phased out accordingly and also the sale of those items
  26. All planning and decision making should be totally bottom up starting from the Neighbourhood Groups (NHG) and they should be allowed to plan and implement the development programmes
  27. Local resources should be the right of the local communities and, any project in an area should have the written approval of the NHGs apart from the grama sabha and panchayat
  28. All projects should have written permission of the Biodiversity Management Committee.
  29. Cess from private, and public enterprises should be collected for reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable income for the farmers and adivasies of the state.
  30. A strong building code should be introduced within two years limiting the maximum size of a house, depending on the number of members; making all constructions environment friendly, reducing the use of non-renewable material such as granites, sand and steel; insisting water harvesting systems in all the houses; recycling and reuse of water; approval of houses costing more than Rs. 30 lakhs with a condition to install solar power; provision for inexpensive but effective waste processing unit
  31. Preparing a Wetland Register for each panchayat in the State, giving a number recording the size, depth and biodiversity of every wetlands (ponds, tanks, canals, streams, lakes and rivers) which should be kept at the panchayat and it should be responsible for its maintenance
  32. Appointing a Mission for Wetland Restoration and ensure restoration of every pond, stream, canal and river within two years

33. Appoint a Commission of inquiry to find out the buildings constructed in the coastal areas violating the CZR rules and take action against the violators within one year
34. Copy of all the applications submitted and consents given by the Pollution Control Board should be made online.
35. The functioning of SEIAA and KCZMA should be transparent and they should initiate criminal cases in all cases of CRZ Violation.
36. Introduce a policy, strategy and action plan followed by suitable legislations for marine fisheries with a focus to maximize catch, arrest illicit fishing, trawling at night, trawling with banned gears, juvenile fishing; controlling the number of fishing vessels and stopping registration of new vessels, especially trawlers and also, taking care of the well-being of fishers and their families
37. Introduce a policy for coastal fisheries focusing on improved production which would entail *inter-alia*, conservation of coastal wetlands, allowing free flow of water from the rivers to maintain the coastal ecosystem and protecting them from pollution
38. Promote indigenous species of fishes for aquaculture and totally ban alien species
39. Implement the land use policy formulated during 2009
40. Companies should be legally accountable for the environmental damages that they cause and for mitigating measures
41. Promote “education for sustainable development” in all formal and informal systems of education and change the syllabi accordingly
42. Constitute a Youth Green Brigade in each panchayat to promote organic farming and nature conservation
43. Fallow lands in the State should be converted for organic farming under the initiatives of LSG
44. Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports be revisited and the provisions that would help everyone, especially the farmers, tribes people and common man and, the provision that ensure ecological security of the Western Ghats be accepted and action taken
45. An action plan for processing and eradicating plastic and electronic wastes should be implemented in a time bound manner
46. Burning of all types of plastic wastes should be legally banned and their scientific processing should be strictly implemented by all government offices, hospitals and LSGs
47. A certain per cent of the annual ecosystem service values should be paid to the communities living around and inside the forests as a gesture of reward for protecting the forests
48. Similarly, such provisions should be made for those communities living around and maintaining wetlands, mangroves and paddy lands

49. Prioritise and fix the programmes of R and D Centres funded by the State on a mission mode to meet the requirements of the State (such as conservation, alternate energy sources, food and health security using local resources, value addition of indigenous crops, inventory of local biodiversity, documentation of traditional knowledge, alternatives to sand, traditional water harvesting system, decentralized waste management, ecofriendly products for packaging, popularization of good food)
50. Ensure maintenance and utilization of sustainable cultures of tribes
51. Ensure enhanced participation of women in livelihood support activities and environment conservation programmes
52. Promote decentralization of IT parks to block levels thereby discouraging urban conglomeration and the resultant environmental issues and, allocate land exclusively for the purpose of IT and not for satisfying the real estate's greed
53. Public transport system should be aggressively promoted and the use of private vehicle, especially "one car - one officer" should be reduced and sharing system be encouraged
54. All efforts should be taken to promote water ways without jeopardizing the traditional fishing practices and affecting their livelihood.
55. In the era of climate change the state cannot afford to have the luxury of hydropower project involving loss of forest. To ensure energy security install solar systems in all government offices, commercial enterprises, industrial units, social and religious institutions and, educational institutions in a phased manner within five years.

If this green agenda is implemented, Kerala will become the first carbon neutral state in India. Similarly Kerala will become the first state in the country following sustainable development practices

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***Annexure: Violations and omissions of the Forest and Environment laws in Kerala***

- i. Tampering of paddy and wetland conservation act of 2008, favoring accelerated filling of wetlands and paddy lands for the benefit of a few,
- ii. Non publication of the data bank by using satellite images as stipulated in the 2008 Act for the unlawful advantage of violators
- iii. Violation of Coastal Zone Regulation act for sky scrapers in the banned area and disappearance of files related to violators
- iv. Amendment of Minor Mineral Mining Rules Act to circumvent NGT's orders that sand mining requires environmental clearance,
- v. Taking share in the Aranmula Airport project of the KGS group only to save it from the Wetland - paddy land Act of 2008
- vi. Violating the promise given to the temple of democracy in the State - the Kerala Assembly, that the government would cancel the unlawful declaration of 1500 acres of wetlands as industrial area in Aranmula (Till now it has not been done!)
- vii. Violation of land utilization Act, even the orders of the Kerala High Court to restore the canals and tanks to its original state by removing the filled sand - again for the benefit of the same private firm for the Aranmula airport
- viii. Reclaiming 300 acres from a 600 acres fertile paddy lands in Muttom when the actual demand was only 75 acres for the Cochin Metro, that too when 253 acres of HMT land was lying idle just 1.5 km away
- ix. Government joining hands with the Cochin Corporation in violating the existing acts and rules by filling 5 acres of wetland - mangrove area in Mundanveli
- x. Filling the remaining 10 acre as of land in the same place belonging to the GCDA by violating the rules and shamelessly got punishment from NGT
- xi. Non-compliance of Supreme Court order that river sand should not be extracted without an Environmental impact assessment study
- xii. Non-compliance of the Supreme Court order that sand extraction during summer should not be allowed from below the water level;
- xiii. permitting the Kerala Irrigation and Infrastructure Ltd. to extract sand from backwaters without any environment impact assessment
- xiv. Permitting a private ecotourism project in the 400 acre wetlands in Methran Kayal, irrespective of the objections from all the concerned departments and strong protest of the local people

- xv. Granting medical tourism project at the expense of 47 acres of pokali land in a state, that too where hardly 6 lakhs tons of rice is produced when 40 lakhs tones are required annually
- xvi. Signing of an agreement for Rs. 7,500 core project for the Vizhinjam Project without a cumulative environment Impact assessment showing clearly the total impact on environment, ecology and, socio-economics of the local people
- xvii. Non-inclusion of rehabilitation cost(approximately Rs. 475 crores) for the 3000 native fishermen in the project document before signing
- xviii. Exclusion of every private holdings from the 123 villages from the ESA and thus denying them of the benefits of ESA only for protecting the quarry mafia
- xix. Submission of a report to the central government showing less than 20% of the forest mapped authentically by the Forest Department
- xx. Disappearance of revenue - forest joint verification reports of encroachment after 1977, making all the encroachment legally valid
- xxi. Violating the pattayam deed by permitting removal of lakhs of trees protected for centuries in the pattayam land of 50,000 acres in the Western Ghats
- xxii. Naked violation of Forest Conservation Act by allotting grass lands and shola forests originally assigned to the tribes in the ecologically fragile area of Wayanad for the Veterinary University
- xxiii. Further asking the Forest Department to withdraw their legally valid objections in favour of violation
- xxiv. Wilfully defeating the efforts of a team of revenue officers appointed by the government to vacate the unlawfully constructed buildings in the forest areas in Chinnar, Chinnakanal, Pallivasal; inaction of the government against those constructing huge buildings for tourism violating the Forest Conservation Act
- xxv. Granting permission for opening new and reopening those closed down quarries and crusher units in the assigned land for agriculture and housing thereby violating the Forest Conservation Act
- xxvi. Allowing illegal quarries to continue functioning thereby violating the orders of the Supreme Court that environmental clearance is required for such practices
- xxvii. Allowing to continue more than 3,500 quarries, in spite of the stay for all the three orders issued by the Government in this effect
- xxviii. Permitting encroachment and construction of buildings in ecologically significant area like Wagmon and illegally assign the

- land itself; allowing 5 % of the planation area for tourism purpose by amending the Land Reformation Act
- xxix. Issuing the orders validating all the encroachments into the revenue land, although it was withdrawn after stiff resistance from public
  - xxx. Permitting a highly polluting industry such as gold processing unit using cyanide and mercury in the KINFRA Park in Kakkanchery in Malappuram which is meant only for nonpolluting, food processing units and IT Park thereby violating all the existing rules even circumventing the NGT's intervention
  - xxxi. Non action of the government thereby allowing similar gold processing unit in the midst of human habitation in the Avinissery panchayat in Trichur district polluting the drinking water, irrespective of the protests of the people;
  - xxxii. Appointing totally unsuitable persons, both by qualification and experience, in the State Environment Impact Appraisal Authority in spite of the objection of the Central government and, CRZ Authority even accommodating officials found guilty by the Chief Secretary thereby making these two important bodies to function according to the whims of the Government
  - xxxiii. Appointing non-experts in the State Wetland Authority violating the guidelines of the National Wetland (Conservation) Act, 2010

These are only some of the glaring instances that we could compile right now where the Government repeatedly and unmistakably stood against the ecology, environment and people endangering the life support system and neglecting development needs of the coming generations and wilfully disregarding the intergenerational equity. And all, indisputably, for the benefit of a few.

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