Translation

Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC)
All Kerala Press Release
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KCBC welcomes Supreme Court judgment

Kochi: The Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) has welcomed the Supreme Court judgment that upheld the constitutional validity of the Forest Conservation Amendment Act while directing that the provisions of the Environment Sensitive Areas (ESA) around protected forests should not be implemented in Kerala.

1. Environment Sensitive Areas (ESA)

The Environment Sensitive Area (ESA) notification issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on June 27 has now become ineffective in Kerala due to the Supreme Court's ruling.

According to the notification, **123 villages in Kerala** had been identified as ESA, covering **9,993.7 square kilometers**. The proposed restrictions would have imposed severe limitations on development and land use in these villages. The Supreme Court's decision has removed the uncertainty that had prevailed regarding these areas.

The KCBC noted that the judgment has brought great relief to ordinary people, farmers and local communities living in these villages. It said the concerns repeatedly raised by the Church and various social organizations regarding the adverse consequences of the ESA notification have now been addressed through the court's intervention.

The council added that the decision is especially significant because it protects the livelihoods of farmers while also safeguarding environmental conservation. It expressed hope that future environmental protection measures would be implemented in a manner that does not undermine the rights and welfare of people living in ecologically sensitive regions.

2. Congratulations

The KCBC congratulated all those who worked together for this outcome. It particularly appreciated the united efforts of farmers, people's representatives, public organizations and social movements that consistently highlighted the concerns of affected communities.

The council also acknowledged the constructive role played by the state government in presenting Kerala's concerns before the court and expressed hope that future environmental policies would continue to balance ecological protection with the legitimate rights and livelihoods of local communities.

Signed,

Bishop Jose Thayyil
Deputy Secretary General and Spokesperson
Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC)