

News

The government's 'Nava Kerala - Citizen Response Program' is revoked by the Kerala High Court.



The Court noted that the ₹20-crore fund allotted for the initiative was executed against the State's financial policy and without required budgetary approval.

The State government's order to launch the "Nava Kerala – Citizen Response Program," which aims to gather household input on government welfare initiatives through a network of committees and volunteers, was overturned by the Kerala High Court on Tuesday [Mubas v State of Kerala & anr & connected case].

A Division Bench consisting of Chief Justice Soumen Sen and Justice Syam Kumar VM ruled that, in advance of the 2026 assembly elections, the government cannot use public resources and equipment for a large-scale home survey that mimics a political campaign.

Additionally, the Court noted that the ₹20-crore public exchequer fund that was set aside for the study was carried out without budgetary or financial consent. The government is not prohibited from implementing welfare programs or development or welfare study initiatives, such as those shown in Exhibit P1, but all expenditures must be approved by the government and adhere to financial regulations. We do not doubt the Cabinet's wisdom in conducting this study, but if funds are used in violation of the financial regulations for its execution and implementation, and such irregularities are documented, the court has the authority to declare the use of funds unlawful," the Court continued.

As a result, it invalidated the government order and prevented the government from carrying out the survey.

Two public interest litigation (PIL) petitions that contested the government's survey program, which was started by an order issued on October 10, 2025, were decided. The State's Information and Public Relations department issued the official directive.

Aloshious Xavier, the president of the Kerala Student Union (KSU), and Mubas MH, a member of the district panchayat, filed the PILs.

The petition claims that the proposed survey would use volunteers to visit homes, public areas, Kudumbashree units, and workplaces at the ward level in order to collect comprehensive data and viewpoints regarding the government's welfare initiatives.

Such door-to-door outreach in the short lead-up to assembly elections, according to the petitioners, amounted to a state-sponsored political exercise masquerading as a development research.

The petitions also pointed out that a "***special PR campaign***" had been used to raise ₹20 crores from the public coffers to carry out the scheme.

The petitioners argued that the survey would violate citizens' right to privacy by collecting a large amount of personal and household-level data without any legal support or sufficient

protections. It is respectfully submitted that the contested program's conception and execution enable a pervasive and unwarranted violation of persons' fundamental right to privacy. The program requires volunteers with ties to the ruling political party to voluntarily gather comprehensive personal and household data. The petition said, "This data collection is being conducted without any statutory sanction, without obtaining citizens' informed consent, and without a strong data protection framework to secure the collected information."

The petitioners went on to say that the program might make it possible for extensive data collection to be abused for political ends. They also said that carrying out such a survey just before the 2026 assembly elections would disrupt the level playing field by giving the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) the opportunity to interact with voters through taxpayer-funded official channels. In both form and substance, the program is a pre-campaign effort masquerading as an administrative activity, according to the petition.

Advocates Ferra A, CA Beema Beevi, Athul P, Sharannya P, and Anoop V. Nair Thankam showed up on behalf of petitioner Mubas.

Tissy Rose K. Cheriyan, Ashika Joshy, Amrutha Selvaraj, and Jain Jaison Mathew represented Xavier.

The State was represented by state attorney N Manoj Kumar and advocate general K Gopalakrishna Kurup.