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Environmental groups oppose plan to recruit anti-poaching watchers through private agencies

CHENNAI – 21 Nov, 2026 Environmental organisations have urged the Tamil Nadu government to withdraw its decision to recruit anti-poaching watchers and other forest protection staff through private agencies, stating that the move could undermine forest and wildlife protection in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

The Forest Department had invited tenders to recruit 293 personnel through outsourcing for the Ooty and Masinagudi forest divisions from December 2026 to March 2027. Of these, 134 personnel would be deployed in the Masinagudi division and 159 in the Ooty division. As many as 221 would be involved in forest and wildlife protection, including 99 anti-poaching watchers.

In a joint statement, Osai and Poovulagin Nanbargal said anti-poaching watchers played a crucial role in protecting forests, particularly in areas vulnerable to poaching and human-wildlife conflict. Many of them were from local and tribal communities who had an intimate understanding of the forests.

They said anti-poaching operations required round-the-clock monitoring from camps set up inside forests. These workers were paid



a monthly wage of ₹15,625 despite working for nearly all 30 days of the month. Many continued in the hope that they would be made permanent after 10 years of service.