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Task force favours policy to ban mining in Western Ghats

Bangalore, Nov 29, 2012, DHNS:

The Western Ghats Task Force (WGTF) has recommended to the government to come out with a clear policy to ban major mining activities involving minerals such as iron ore, manganese and bauxite in Western Ghats.

It should also formulate a policy banning hydroelectric projects in forest valleys of the Ghats and its foothills, the task force recommended. The task force on Wednesday released a series of study reports, including the 'Carrying Capacity of Uttara Kannada districts,' along with 14 key recommendations on conservation of the Ghats.

The study, which was commissioned two-and-a-half years ago to Indian Institute of Science scientist T V Ramachandra, highlights the increasing pollution levels in the four major rivers in the Ghats – Kali, Bedti, Aganashini and Sharavathi.

Ramachandra also said that the honey bee population was rapidly dwindling in forests of Karnataka due to habitat loss, felling of 'honey bee trees,' forest fragmentation, and indiscriminate use of pesticides. "Immediate action should be taken to conserve the honey bee population and the species by drawing up appropriate programmes.

He said that in the last four decades the evergreen forest coverage had reduced from 80 per cent to 40 per cent, with over 2,500 sq km of area being lost to development projects and land use.

Ramachandra said that there was a need for proper accounting of forest resources, apart from ensuring that no development projects were allowed in the Ghats.

Forest Minister C P Yogeshwara said that the department would keep aside a separate budget for the Coastal Green Wall project, while the 'Betta development' project would be jointly taken up by the department and WGTF.