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Ban mining, say no to hydel projects in the Ghats: Task force

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The Western Ghats Task Force (WGTF) on Thursday submitted 14-point report to the state government that could go a long way in ensuring conservation and sustainable development of the Western Ghats. The report urged the government to come out with a clear policy to ban major mining of minerals such as iron, manganese and bauxite in Western Ghats. It also urged the government not to give permission to any form of hydroelectric projects in in the forest valleys and foothills of Western Ghats. Villages Forest Committees should also be given a share in benefits.

Speaking after submitting the recommendations to forest minister CP Yogeshwar, WGTF chairman Ananth Hegde Ashisar said half of the suggestions included extending various facilities to the local dwellers.

"The government should consider inclusion of the localites at the time of formulation of policies to ensure success in implementation of its projects," he said. "The government should think in this direction instead of focusing on just implementation of projects," he said adding that: "Village forest committees will have to be strengthened."

Ashisar claimed that 25 years of struggle of people of Uttara Kannada district bore fruit in the form of the committee submitting its recommendations for the development of the people. The government had already implemented many recommendations in the budget, he said.

Yogeshwar said there is a need to have a green zone in the coastal belt of Karavali region. This will be realised by allotting 70% of dry land to farmers and using 30 percent of dry land to develop a green zone.

"I will discuss the issue in the next cabinet meeting. Our state has achieved progress in various fields such as information technology. However, we also need to focus on conservation of environment. We need to protect the nature by implementing strict laws," Yogeshwar opined.

He said he will try to implement all the recommendations of the task force. Vamanacharya, chairman of the Pollution Control Board, said the formation of the task force was a unique experiment by the government which will go a long way in protecting nature. He appealed that government should take action against elements which are causing damage to Dandeli forest reserve.

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