

## Karnataka to implement recommendations of Western Ghats Task Force

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Karnataka Forest Minister C P Yogeshwar on Thursday assured the Western Ghats Task Force of implementing its 14 main recommendations on conservation and sustainable development on the issue.

“Our government has taken the issue conservation of Western Ghats seriously and would implement all the 14 chief recommendations made by the Western Ghats Task Force,” he said addressing the Force. Yogeshwar said the recommendation on strengthening Village Forest Committees (VFCs) would be taken up in the cabinet meeting.

The task force had recommended that the VFCs should be given the right share in the benefits generated through forest protection and development work by the department periodically so that they could engage in the activities related to forest conservation. The task force also recommended that all taluks in Western Ghats should be brought under “Naxal Package” benefits so that all remote villages in the forest area get the basic facilities.

The task force also recommended the government to come out with a clear policy to ban major mining in Western Ghats region, which involve minerals like iron ore, manganese and bauxite.

It also recommended that the government should not give permission to any form of hydroelectric projects in the forest valleys of Western Ghats and its foothills in Karnataka.

The task force further recommended that many tribal and dwellers in the forest areas have not yet been able to get the basic facilities like all season roads, power and primary health centre. Government should take it up on priority, along with optimum utilisation of central assistance, it said.