

Environmentalists sore over felling of trees in Kali valley

- [N. Dinesh Nayak](#)

As many as 1,000 teakwood trees cut in the Lalguli-Douginala forest area

Felling of trees in the lush green Kali valley in Uttara Kannada district by the Forest Department has irked environmental activists.

The Forest Department has felled 1,000 teakwood trees on 500 acres in the Lalguli-Douginala forest area as per the working plan. The area is close to the Dandeli Reserve Forests and has been declared an elephant reserve in 2014. Felling of trees here was in violation of the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, Environment (Protection) Act, Wildlife Protection Act and the Biological Diversity Act, the former chairman of the Western Ghats Task Force, Anant Hegde Ashisar said.

The Forest Department argues that the teakwood trees were planted by them. However, they were 80-100 years old. Many miscellaneous tree species too have grown over the years there.

Many rare medicinal plants too were destroyed and wildlife species such as wild bees had lost their natural habitation, he said.

Mr. Ashisar alleged that the opinion of the village forest committees was not sought before executing the working plan. The Kali valley, where over one lakh acres of forest was destroyed for various projects, is one of the most ecologically vulnerable areas in the region.

A report on the carrying capacity of Uttara Kannada district by the scientists in the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, T.V. Ramachandra and M.D. Subhas Chandran, too had warned against further destruction of forests. "It is a pity that the Forest Department has executed the working plan with scant regard for ecological issues and experts' opinion," Mr. Ashisar said.

Principal Conservator of Forests Vinay Luthra said the working plan was a scientific document and according to its prescribed norms, only the planted teakwood trees were cut down. The environmentalists were objecting for the presence of teakwood in that region all these years.

The miscellaneous species which have come up over the years have not been touched. The department would plant saplings of teakwood and local species there, Mr. Luthra added.

The area is close to the Dandeli Reserve Forests and has been declared an elephant reserve

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