

Forest ecological value in Karnataka shows big decline from 2015 to 2019

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By Bosky Khanna

Express News Service

BENGALURU: Forests and the ecological system are a prime contributor to the state and central GDP, but their contribution and value are always undermined, say researchers, pointing to the recent report released by the Centre for Ecological

Sciences, IISc.

‘The Valuation of Terrestrial Ecosystem Services, Karnataka State, India’ throws light on the contribution made by forests to GDP in terms of tangible and non-tangible benefits, but face the brunt of denotification. Prof T V Ramachandra, from CES, IISc, co-author of the paper, stated that as the state government is working on preparing a green budget, it is important to understand the ecological and economic benefits of forests.

“Since proper accounting of the ecosystem has not been done, and forests are undervalued, the budget allocated to the forest department for better protection of forests is low. The biggest pilferage has been seen in mining areas,” he said. Degradation of forest cover is a worry, and the recent forest cover report released by the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change has listed monoculture also as a part of forests, which is ironic, he said.

He added that not just studies, but time and again, nature has shown that where there is monoculture, water availability in wells and streams is for 6-8 months, where there is natural vegetation, water availability is round the year, and where there are degraded forests, water availability is only for 3-4 months.

In the report, researchers have assessed ecological value from 2005 to 2019. They admitted that due to the pandemic, ground assessment was not possible.

Comparing values of 2019 with 2005, the report highlights that there has been a considerable decline in ecosystem services in Karnataka -- 28.5 per cent reduction in provisioning services (51.6 per cent reduction in forest ecosystems), 21 per cent reduction in regulatory services (27.1 per cent reduction in forest ecosystems) and 1.9 per cent reduction in cultural services.

In the report, ecosystem services were aggregated to compute the Total Ecosystem Supply Value (TESV). Researchers also compared TESV to the GDP of Karnataka, which is about Rs 10,128 billion. TESV of the forest ecosystem is equivalent to 18.1 per cent of the GDP.

What report says

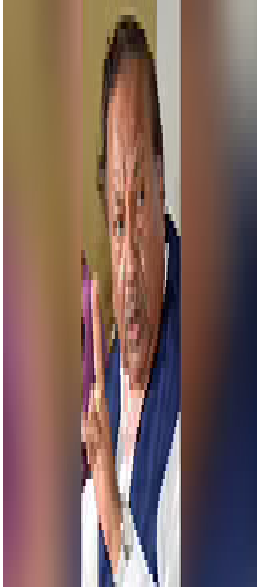
In 2005, value of forest and agricultural ecosystems in Karnataka was Rs 3,620 billion

In 2019, it declined to Rs 2,912 billion

Forest ecosystems drive the decline with 35 per cent in TESV

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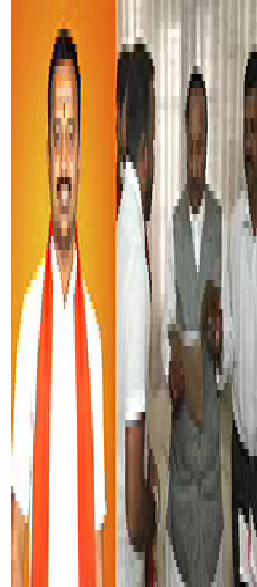
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