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Task force to submit report on Western Ghats conservation

Special Correspondent

Plan to conserve forests to be based on findings of studies conducted earlier

Support of UAS , IISc will be sought

Forest Department officials invited to make suggestions



For posterity: Adviser to the Chief Minister K. Diwakar planting a sapling during 'Hasarikarana' programme at Hosagunda in Sagar taluk of Shimoga district on Friday.

SHIMOGA: The Chairman of the Task Force for Conservation and Protection of the Western Ghats, Ananth Hegde Ashishar, said on Friday that the task force would submit the status report periodically on the environmental problems in the Western Ghats and the steps to be taken to solve them.

Mr. Hegde, who was in Hosagund in Sagar taluk to participate in the 'Hasarikarana' (afforestation) programme, organised by the Uma Maheshwar Seva Trust in association with the Forest Department, was talking to presspersons.

Mr. Hegde said that the task force would like to consolidate studies undertaken by various environmental organisations and public institutions for conservation and protection of the Western Ghats. A comprehensive plan would be drawn up on the basis of the studies and a plan would also be drawn to secure funds from the Central Mission for Medicinal Plants.

Researchers have made suggestions for conservation of the forest and other natural resources in the Western Ghats, Mr. Hegde noted.

So, "findings of researchers will be consolidated so that a comprehensive policy decision can be taken by the Government for conservation and protection of the Western Ghats" and added that the task force would like to actively involve the University of Agricultural Sciences, Indian Institute of Science and the Forest Department in its activities.

At the 'Hasarikarana' programme, Mr. Hegde suggested that if village forest committees are set up and if gram panchayats used 18 per cent of the funds released to them for afforestation properly, then, conservation and protection of the forests would be more effective.

Inviting suggestions from officials of the Forest Department, Mr. Hegde said they were free to suggest ways to conserve and protect the Western Ghats and also for the effective management of the forest. Mr. Hegde also pointed out that the task force would draw the Government's attention to issues faced by the Forest Department such as shortage of staff, which affects work connected to conservation of

forest and natural resources.

Mr. Hegde pointed out that 70 per cent of the posts of the lower staff were lying vacant from a long time now.

Adviser to the Chief Minister K. Diwakar, the chief guest of 'Hasarikarana' programme, spoke on the need take up development projects without causing harm to the rich forest resources.

The Managing Trustee of the Uma Maheshwar Seva Trust, C.M. Narayana Sastry, said they proposed to plant 108 plants of each of the 108 species of medicinal plants in five years' time.

The Deputy Conservator of Forest, Mahesh Shirur, industrialist T.N. Singh, were present.

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