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Western Ghats Task Force proposes recruitment of 1,000 forest staff

Davangere, May 9, 2012, DHNS :

Protection of five river valley basins tops its agenda

The Western Ghats Task Force has submitted a proposal to recruit 1,000 forest personnel required to protect the natural forests of the Western Ghats.

This was announced by Ananth Hegde Ashisara, chairperson of the Task Force, at a meeting on the protection of environment, forests and bio-diversity and pollution control at the Deputy Commissioner's office in the city on Wednesday.

The Task Force was formed in 2008 to implement projects aimed at the protection of forests and the environment, through scientific methods involving community.

As many as 1,000 personnel had been appointed in the first phase. The second phase envisages appointment of another 1,000 personnel, including forest guards, range forest officers and conservators of forests, the chairperson said.

There were 4,500 village forest committees (VFCs) in the State, of which only 1,000 were active. The rest of them would be revived, Ashisara said. The VFCs help in the conservation of forests, bio-diversity and in the sale of minor forest produce.

He announced that a 'save river basin' campaign had already been launched by the Task Force in association with the people.

The campaign aims to protect five river valleys - Malaprabha, Nethravathi, Sharavathi, Kumudvathi and Aghanashini - through public awareness and action campaigns, by involving people's representatives, Panchayat Raj institutions, farmers, forest dwellers and students.

Under the green health campaign, the Task Force has given importance for the conservation of medicinal plants in Shimoga, Hosanagar and other places in Western Ghats with the help of the Forest department. Special emphasis is on medicinal plants that can cure cancer, diabetes and other harmful diseases.

The Task Force is also encouraging the protection of ecologically sensitive areas like primary forest pockets, sacred groves and river valleys by involving the local people. Bio-diversity heritage sites like Ambaragudda in Shimoga and Hogarekanugiri in Chikmagalur would also be protected.

Ashisara said the Task Force had also submitted a proposal to the government to take up watershed development programme, using at least 10 per cent of the funds provided to the irrigation department.

The Task Force has taken steps for the protection of khau forest land in Shimoga and Imam Desai forest land in Dharwad, he said.

It has also taken steps to stop illegal mining activities in forest land and encroachment of forest land.

Sandalwood saplings

Ashisara said the Task Force had asked the forest department to supply sandalwood saplings to farmers to encourage them to grow sandalwood trees on their land.

In Davangere district, sandalwood saplings were being grown in the nurseries of Honnali forest range. This year, the department plans to distribute saplings to 8,000 farmers in the district.



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