



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Conservation, revival vital in forest policy

25 November 2019



BENGALURU: After 1988, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, Ecology and Climate Change is working on revising the Forest Policy. While the draft is still being finalised, reactions have already started pouring in. One of the most important aspects which many forest officials and experts have demanded to be addressed is forest degradation and how forests can be revived. While the policy will cover points like afforestation and research, the officials demand that thrust should also be laid on the road ahead in the wake of increasing threats.

The new policy has also created a rift between the ministry and department officials. Even as some praise the ministry's efforts to revise the policy after 31 years, forest officials from various states say that their opinions have not been incorporated, especially on forest degradation.

Suresh Gairola, Director General, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), said the policy will include man-animal conflict, protection of buffer zones and how to combat forest fires. He said ICFRE and the ministry are working towards neutralising forest degradation by 2030. Seventeen developmental goals are being chalked out, including

land desertification and land use. Some officials, however, are strongly objecting to the point of privatising many forest patches.

“It has been misunderstood by the ministry that if trees are not growing, then that patch is a vacant land and can be given to private players for plantation. It will open the door for commercial activities,” a senior Karnataka Forest Department official said. They also point that the policy should make laws more stringent to cap infrastructure works.

“In case of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, while on one hand the ministry has agreed to close NH-212 during night, it is even contemplating on permanently closing the road for traffic as it passes through the core tiger reserve. It is also contemplating on widening the alternate route (Mysuru-Hunsur-Gonikuppa-Kutta-Mananthawadi),” said a forest official.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2019/nov/25/conservation-revival-vital-in-forest-policy-2066609.html>