

Kerala targets regeneration of natural forests

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A monocrop (teak) plantation of the Forest Department at Thirunelly under the Begur forest range in the North Wayanad forest division. Panel formed to study clearing of mono crop plantations



The Forest Department is planning to conduct a feasibility study on regenerating natural forests after felling mono crop plantations, including teak plantations, in forest areas. A few decades ago, the department had converted vast areas of natural forests into monoculture plantations with commercial objectives. But it is presumed that the plantations had adversely affected biodiversity and accelerated man-animal conflict in these areas. However, the government has failed to generate income from the plantations as recent Supreme Court directives and forest Acts are against extracting trees from national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. The aim of the study is to submit a proposal to the Centre to get relaxation to regenerate natural forests after felling a limited stretch of trees from the monoculture plantations every year. The proposal, if approved, is expected to generate income from plantations, improve wildlife habitat, increase availability of water in forests, ensure water and fodder for wildlife ,reduce import of wood from foreign countries, and mitigate man-animal conflict. According to available data, teak has been planted on 50,000 hectares of forestland as monoculture in the State, of which 30,000 hectares is in Wayanad. The government has constituted a five-member committee, chaired by B.N. Anjan Kumar, Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), for the purpose. “We are collecting scientific journals and research studies on natural regeneration of forests in different parts of the world,” Mr. Kumar said. He said if site specific studies were needed, a reconnaissance survey would be conducted as early as possible. The first meeting of the committee would be convened by the second week of June. E.Kunhikrishnan, former professor, Department of Zoology, University College, Thiruvananthapuram; P. Balakrishnan, wildlife scientist, KFRI, Peechi; P.O. Nameer, professor, Department of Wildlife Science, College of Forestry, Thrissur; and James Zachariah, retired assistant forest conservator, are the other committee members.

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