

Mananthavady municipality to organize human chain today

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Awaiting the axe: The reserve forest at Ondayangadi in the North Wayanad Forest Division where a plantation is planned. Protest against move to clear forest near Ondayangadi and plant monocrop. The Mananthavady Municipality will organise a human chain in Mananthavady town on Thursday evening in protest against the alleged move of the Kerala Forest to replant mono crop on a piece of forest land near Ondayangadi under Thrissilery section of the Begur forest range after razing the pristine forest region.



The programme would be organised in association with various environmental groups, students and farmer organisations.

The 2-km human chain would be formed from Ondayangadi to Kattikulam Anpathinalu from 3.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. on the day.

Mananthavady Municipal Chairman V.R. Praveej will inaugurate the programme at 3.30 p.m. The department is preparing to replant monocrop like teak on 32.5 hectare of forest land in the Ondayangadi reserve forest under the North Wayanad forest division, Mr. Praveej said.

The forestland had been converted to a monocrop plantation in 1958 after razing a natural forest in the area. However, a natural forest was regenerated in the area after felling the teak woods on it. Now, it is a haven for various species of fauna and a treasure trove of flora, Mr. Praveej said.

The northern circle Chief Conservator of Forests had recently issued a direction to clear-fell the forest and replant the monocrop on it, he said. But such a move would adversely affect the biodiversity of the district, a region known for the increasing man-animal conflict in the country, he said.

Mr. Praveej said monoculture plantation would increase man-animal conflict further. It would also worsen water scarcity and speed up desertification, a phenomenon that had begun in villages in the district on the border with Karnataka, said T.C. Joseph, chairman, Wayanad Action Committee to Prevent Wildlife Attack, a farmers' organisation. The total forest area of the district, he said, was 1,100 sq km, of which nearly 350 sq km had been planted with teak and eucalyptus after clear-felling the natural forest.

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