



Go green this Budget, Forest dept tells CM

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If B S Yediyurappa, as the finance minister, makes up his mind, then the 2020-21 Karnataka Budget will have shades of green to indicate the environmental impact of the projects that he will announce. The Forest, Ecology & Environment (FEE) department has proposed introducing a Green Budget, which the Finance department is discussing. Chief Minister Yediyurappa is scheduled to present the 2020-21 Budget on March 5.

Green budgeting is a process where authorities take stock of the public expenditure earmarked for environmentally-sustainable initiatives as well as reducing spending in sectors that are unsustainable. The Green Budget document seeks to provide information for considering environmental components in financial planning and budgeting practices.

The FEE department, which has proposed this, is awaiting an audience with Yediyurappa once he returns from the World Economic Forum at Davos on January 24.

“We have come up with a toolkit to measure the greenness of any particular project based on certain parameters,” a top FEE department official said.

Developed with the help of the state-run Environmental Management & Policy Research Institute (EMPRI), the toolkit also aims to colour-code government schemes or projects. “We will have a spectrum from red to dark green,” the official explained. “In terms of impact, a project coloured dark green will mean very good for the environment; projects at the other end of the spectrum marked red will mean environmentally bad.”

Green budgeting, authorities argue, will help Karnataka meet the goals set by India’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), the country’s climate plan. It will also help meet targets set at the Conference of Parties (COP), Paris in 2015.

Environmentalists have often opposed government projects that are not sustainable. For instance, citizens were up in arms when the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government proposed a steel flyover, or when the H D Kumaraswamy regime wanted to build a network of elevated corridors — both in Bengaluru, a city that has significantly lost its green cover over the years.

A Green Budget report that EMPRI released in February 2019 analysed the outlays of 10 major government departments for the financial year 2017-18. It found that out of Rs 35,436.59 crore, the departments set aside Rs 7,243.27 crore — or 20% — on green works.

For instance, the Public Works Department spent just 4% of its total outlay of Rs 3,214 crore on greening measures such as mitigating or making up for loss of vegetation due to highway projects.

The assessment concluded with EMPRI recommending a 10% increase in the existing Budget in order to achieve INDC targets.

Source: <https://www.deccanherald.com/state/top-karnataka-stories/go-green-this-budget-forest-dept-tells-cm-796576.html>