

## State losing heavily in forestry sector

Staff Reporter

BHUBANESWAR: Lifting of trade barriers and flooding of Foreign Direct Investments in economic sphere have their adverse impact on natural systems and indigenous communities of the country, activists and academicians opined here on Saturday.

Speaking at a national workshop on 'underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation' organised by NGOs such as Pune-based Kalpavriksha and Bhubaneswar-based Vasundhara, experts said natural resources were being remorselessly exploited and it resulted in fast loss of habitat cover.

Especially, Orissa, which is witnessed to fast industrialisation, is losing heavily in forestry sector.

"If we take conservative estimates the average forest product produced per annum, then the rate of deforestation per hectare in Orissa comes to Rs. 1768.69 and for the State as a whole it comes to Rs. 1028.23 crore per annum," Sushanta Kumar Nayak, head of Economics Department of Rajiv Gandhi University at Itanagar, said.

"The study also found out that per-hectare value of forest was Rs. 26,662 at 2000 price, which comes to Rs. 29,577 at 2003-04 prices. However, per hectare value submitted by company for forest in Sambalpur district is estimated to be Rs. 16313," Mr. Nayak said.

### Estimates

Quoting different estimates by academicians, he said 347644.4 hectare of forestland was deforested every year in Orissa. "If this trend continues, the existing stock of forest will deplete in around Rs. 16.72 year," Mr. Nayak warned saying major users of forest resources in Orissa were industry and service sector.

The scene in national level is no better. "Between 1980 to 2006, 1140176.86 ha of forests have been diverted for different projects.

Approximately, 3,11,220.38 hectare has been cleared by Ministry of Environment and Forest since 2003 (a quarter of the clearance)," Kanchi Kohli, an environmentalist, said.

He said 111633 hectare of forest was alone diverted for mining while 219021 ha for hydro-electricity and irrigation projects.

"The granting of forest clearance has increased massively during four to five years. Public participations in clearance project has been undermined," Mr. Kohli said.

Most of the participants were of the views that the upcoming mining and industrial projects in Orissa would exert severe pressure on forests of the State. The economy revolving around tribal population in forest areas would witness a turmoil, they warned.

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/27/stories/2008012756200300.htm>