

BANGALORE, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2014

# THE HINDU

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

RNI No. TNENG/1970/49945 • ISSN 0971-751X • Vol. 45 • No. 49 • CITY EDITION • 26 Pages • Rs. 4.00 • www.thehindu.in

## 'Do not politicise Western Ghats issue'

### We will clear all apprehensions of the people of Kerala: Moily

Special Correspondent

**BANGALORE:** Union Minister for Environment and Forests M. Veerappa Moily on Wednesday appealed to people who are opposed to the Kasturirangan report on the Western Ghats, especially those in Kerala, not to politicise the issue.

Speaking on the sidelines of an international seminar on 'Sandalwood: current trends and future prospects', jointly organised by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education and the Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Mr. Moily said the Union government's decision to implement the report was premised on the conservation of the Western Ghats.

Referring to a recent circular issued by the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council asking people to support political parties who were opposed to the report, Mr. Moily said: "This is an environment-related issue and not a political one. The Kerala government had sent us a report on the possible impact of the report. We will clear all apprehensions of



A visitor from Jharkhand at an international seminar on sandalwood in Bangalore on Wednesday. — PHOTO: SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.

the people of Kerala."

"We are aware that the residents of some districts in Kerala are on a warpath against the report. Their main apprehension is that the implementation of the report will lead to large-scale displacement and will affect their livelihood. But I assure them that no one will be dislocated and infrastructure will not be affected," he

said. Replying to queries, he said the decision to implement the report was taken only after considering that State's views.

Earlier, inaugurating the seminar, Mr. Moily said he would write to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to declare sandalwood tree as a "Royal Tree."

"Often referred to as 'tree gold,' it is valued not only in

trade and commerce but has been a part of cultural heritage of Karnataka. I feel sandalwood products should be a prized possession in every house and office [both private and government]. Ministers should have it in their chambers. Sandalwood trees should be planted on the premises of all government offices and there should be accounting of all trees," he said.

### Climate

Governor H.R. Bhardwaj expressed concern over the diminishing number of sandalwood trees in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. "Despite stringent laws to prohibit illicit felling and smuggling of sandalwood, cultivation is decreasing," he said.

He said people should not fall to fake varieties of the wood that were available at cheaper rates.

The governor released a book titled 'Sandalwood - research accomplishments of IWST 1938 to 2013'. Mr. Moily released the seminar abstracts. R.A. Shrimathi, a veteran sandalwood researcher, was felicitated.