

Forest Dept stops plantation of eucalyptus trees on roadsides

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After filing of petitions with the National Green Tribunal by environmentalists, the Forest Department has stopped planting of eucalyptus trees on roadsides in the district.

However, the panchayats in the district are still planting the eucalyptus on roadsides in the rural areas.

The forest experts claim that it takes all the nutrients from the soil and makes it infertile for other crops.

“We have observed the problems in the plantation of the eucalyptus trees. However, it is good for waterlogged areas but generally it makes the soil infertile for other plants and takes a lot of water to survive. So, we have stopped its plantation. The farmers in some areas plant on their own but we don’t recommend it”, said Divisional Forest Officer Surjit Singh Sahota.

Punjab is one of the major eucalyptus producing states in the country which suffices the demands of the timber, pulp and paper industries.

Hoshiarpur-based Safal Bharat Guru Parampara Punjab filed a case in the NGT and later in the Punjab and Haryana High Court stating extreme utilisation of ground water and citing commercial eucalyptus cultivation as one of the reasons behind it. The case is still sub judice in the court while in 2015 the NGT had stated that there could not be a complete ban on eucalyptus plantation in the state. However, it is for the Forest Department to evolve appropriate policy by regulating and restricting the growth of the eucalyptus plantation.

Beer Partap Rana, office bearer of the Safal Bharat Guru Parampara Punjab, said, “The NGT recommendations should be implemented in all districts. There are some areas in Punjab, which have been declared the dark zone area but plantation of eucalyptus is still going on”.

Michal Rahul, a social worker, said, “The panchayats and other rural bodies should not plant the exotic trees. There are several native trees which are about to go extinct. The government departments should promote such plants in the district.”

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