

Resin From 'Unwanted' Chir Pines to Bring Rs. 90 Crore to State Cooffers

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While Uttarakhand government last year approached the Supreme Court seeking to chop chir pines "wherever they are in large numbers", ironically the state is set to earn over Rs 90 crore after 1.65 lakh quintal of resin produced from the trees is sold in a nationwide auction.

According to the state government policy, 50% of the collected resin is sold to local units, 25% to Khadi gramodyog outlets and 25% is auctioned outside the state. But this year, the Uttarakhand forest department requested the state government to conduct the auction at a national level, said Rajender Kumar Mahajan, principal chief conservator of forests. The request has been accepted and a government order in this regard will soon be passed.

Around 70,000 to 80,000 quintal of resin is collected in the state every year. A quintal of resin, widely used in varnishes, adhesives and medicine, sells for around six to seven thousand rupees.

"The resin stock lying since 2014 has accumulated to 1.65 lakh quintal and needs to be disposed of quickly as it is highly inflammable and also starts deteriorating after a point of time. My first priority is to sell it off in a nationwide auction, where it is estimated to earn over Rs 90 crore," Mahajan told TOI.

"Most of the resin is from forest depots in Rishikesh, Kotdwar, Kathgodam, Champavat and Almora. There are only three states, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, in the country which produce resin, the rest is imported from China and Indonesia," said Mahajan.

The state government last year appealed to Supreme Court to be allowed to remove chir pines "wherever they are in large numbers". To fell trees which are taller than 1,000 metres, a state requires permission from the Supreme Court.

Former principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF), SK Chandola said, "The leaves of chir pine are highly inflammable. Most of the forest fire occurs due to chir every summer. The tree also does not let a plant or grass grow under it. This tree is also not edible for the herbivores, so its expansion is affecting availability of food for wild animals. We should grow trees such as oak, timla etc in the vacant patches after felling chir trees."

However, Anil Dutt, former PCCF (wildlife) said, "It is wrong to say that chir is a useless tree, rather each part of this tree is immensely useful. This is the reason 80% of the villages are situated around chir cultivation. It gives out resin and the work related to

extraction of resin and its processing has generated employment and income for hundreds of villagers.

The Times of India (New Delhi), 11 March 2016