

those concerned is pathetic. Excuses are always at hand: Forest Department did not hesitate while giving Revenue lands on lease to HNL for Eucalyptus Grandis cultivation, but to protect forest on Revenue lands, they desist. An accurate GPS-based survey by the Survey Department could have determined the ground situation correctly long ago. But that department is a shame to any professional administration: it is a living example of a self-centred, self-aggrandising department with no concern for public interest or interest of the genuine land-holders. The Revenue Department had an excellent opportunity to arrest the mischief and take corrective action in 2010 when the issue came to light. But the Government lacked the will to pursue action. Since then, over the last 4 years, matters have only got worse. If the Government does not act even now, this crucial part of our State will be handed over for good to encroachers and land grabbers. Tourists visit the State attracted by its natural beauty, be it the highlands or the coastline. If these are allowed to be destroyed by the greed of few, the harm caused will indeed be irreparable.

The extensive cultivation of Eucalyptus Grandis on public lands by the private individuals in all the five villages of Anchunadu tract is an example of law enforcing machinery having suffered a near break-down. The Revenue Department has tacitly allowed to use public land for private purposes; the Forest Department has mutely allowed the illegal orders of the RDO to be implemented whereas the Survey Department is unable to survey the land. Revenue Department represented by Sub Collector / RDO Devikulam could not complete the settlement of rights in the sanctuary during the last eight years whereas it was to be done within a period of two years as per the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The Government needs to show a more resolute political will to enforce the Rule of law in that tract. It is very pertinent that Revenue Department should identify and delineate public land and carry out the eviction from such land. This should include all encroachers who are squatting on the land on the basis of either forged or illegal pattayams.

The extensive plantations of Eucalyptus in these areas are playing havoc with the eco-system of the area. In terms of helping local economy, these plantations are not of much utility as Eucalyptus plantations employ minimal labour force and these are basically owned by