

Rajasthan's bio fuel cultivation plan faces flak

Rajasthan's decision to allot hundreds of thousands of acres of wasteland for bio-fuel crops has drawn criticism from many who fear it will eat into traditional grazing grounds.

According to B.D. Kalla, the state Congress president, what the government describes as wastelands are actually fields where villagers take their livestock for grazing.

He said allotting the land to private players would disturb the rural lifestyle and leave no space for animals to graze.

The government argues that the move will only benefit the state's economy.

'The Congress is opposing it just for the sake of opposing it,' said L.N.Dave, the minister for mines.

But the bio-fuel policy has also drawn flak from an NGO, 'Suchna Evum Rozgar Ka Adhikar Abhiyan', which says the government's aim is to allot public land to private players at throwaway prices.

'The cabinet decision to lease out 5.7 million hectares of wasteland to private parties, including large corporates, is a clear indication of the government's lopsided priorities,' said Aruna Roy, a member of the NGO.

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