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Forest department and railways approve new operating procedure



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Trains running through lion habitat are now required to switch off engine headlights or dim them whenever a lion or other wild animal is spotted on or near railway tracks. It has been recognized that high beams can potentially blind animals, causing distress and panic, ultimately leading them to stay immobile.

During a joint meeting held on April 5, a consensus was reached between the railways and the forest department regarding a standard operating procedure (SOP) for train operations in lion habitat.

The SOP, which was finalized during the meeting, was agreed upon by senior officials of the railways and the deputy conservators of forests (DCFs) of Gir East-Dhari, Shetrunji-Palitana, and Social Forestry - Amreli. This document outlines the measures to be taken in order to protect lions and other wild animals.

As per the SOP, caution orders will be enforced by forest officials to maintain a balance between wildlife safety and railway operational efficiency. In identified hotspots, permanent caution orders with a speed limit of 40 kmph will be implemented from sunset to sunrise. Additionally, temporary caution orders will be issued

The SOP specifies that the forest department will provide real-time updates on lion movements to railway authorities, including the nearest station, enabling timely regulation of speeds. To facilitate this communication, a dedicated WhatsApp group has been established by the railways and the state forest department. This platform serves as a hub for real-time information exchange, allowing for swift updates on lion sightings. It enables messages to be conveyed more efficiently than contacting railway officials individually.

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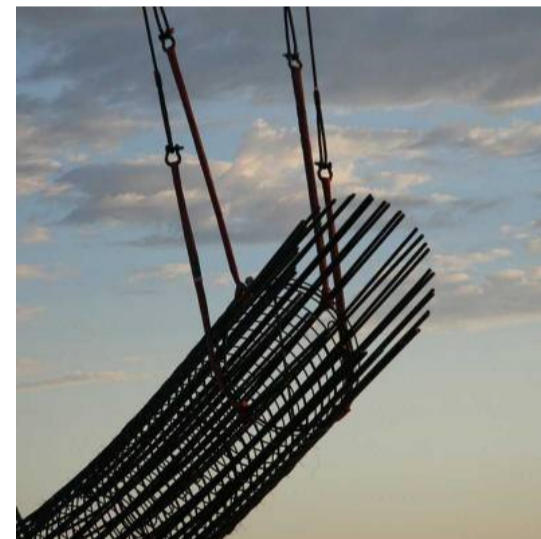
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