Forest department installs three AI-based thermal cameras in Coimbatore forest division

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Coimbatore: To curb man-animal conflicts and monitor vulnerable locations round-the-clock, the Tamil Nadu forest department has installed three Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based thermal cameras at three locations in the Coimbatore forest division.

The cameras will detect trespassing of humans into reserve forest areas, and help prevent poaching, encroachments, and illegal felling of trees.

"The cameras will monitor vulnerable locations 24x7 from a command centre. These cameras can significantly enhance our capacity to respond to potential threats and human-animal conflicts," said S Ramasubramanian, conservator of forests, Coimbatore circle.

Under the Tamil Nadu Innovation Initiatives (TANII) project, Rs 1 crore was sanctioned to the Coimbatore forest division to set up a real-time monitoring system to monitor the movement of elephant herds and to strengthen alert mechanisms and address human-elephant conflicts.

"These cameras utilize advanced technology to detect heat signatures and forest fires at the early stage. It can detect the heat signatures from wildlife like elephants, leopards, gaurs, and deer," Ramasubramaninan said.

He said AI-based thermal cameras can identify and monitor wildlife movements, particularly in areas, where human-animal conflicts are prevalent.

By detecting the heat signatures of animals, these cameras can help authorities and conservationists understand animal behaviour and movement patterns, which can aid in predicting potential conflicts.

"We can implement preventive measures such as creating barriers or rerouting human activities to minimize encounters with wildlife and respond promptly to incidents, ensuring the safety of both humans and animals," Ramasubramanian said.

"We can detect the heat signatures from fire sources even in dense vegetation or low visibility conditions through the AI-based thermal cameras. We can also provide real-time alerts to the field staff of the forest department and firefighting teams from the command-and-control centre, enabling them to respond quickly and effectively," Ramasubramanian said.

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