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3 states join hands for forest protection

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Karnataka, Kerala, TN officials meet, decide to work towards identification, expansion of wildlife habitats

With Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala sharing forest borders, now the three states have joined hands to collaborate to prevent wildlife conflict, poaching, and to conserve forest and wildlife. A joint meeting of the three states held on Sunday decided to work for the identification and expansion of wildlife habitats, along with a steadfast commitment to forest conservation despite the encroachment of residential areas.

Karnataka's forest Minister Eshwar Khandre said, "This is a genuine commitment to collaborate across borders in order to decrease human-animal conflicts.

This commitment was further reinforced by strategic coordination, which facilitated seamless collaboration, structured information sharing, and joint efforts against the challenges posed by human-wildlife conflicts. A resource exchange programme has been proposed, signifying coordinated efforts to exchange critical resources, expertise, and knowledge among the participating states. Moreover, the meeting stressed on the importance of estimating wildlife numbers and conducting joint operations, enabling informed decision-making and coordinated actions.

Additionally, there was a proposal to establish an advisory council comprising wildlife conservation experts, aimed at providing valuable insights to enhance conflict management strategies. The meeting also highlighted the necessity for regular review and adaptation of governance practices to ensure sustainable excellence and to adapt to evolving responsibilities.

Through these collaborative initiatives, we envisioned a future where humans and wildlife coexist harmoniously, transcending administrative boundaries and leaving behind a legacy of responsible conservation."

AK Saseendran, Minister for Forest and Wildlife, Kerala government said the meeting was not convened at the central government's behest but was the result of the concern and self-effort of the three southern states.

Khandre said, “Wild animals roam freely between forests. Elephants have freely roamed between Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka for centuries, transcending state borders. There exists an elephant corridor, and tigers also move between forests. Measures to mitigate damage to lives or crops caused by wildlife in any state will soon be implemented.

Late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi prioritized forest and wildlife conservation and enacted relevant acts. Subsequent governments’ emphasis on preserving forest and wildlife wealth has led to their preservation and an increase in wild animal numbers. In today’s meeting, it was decided to cooperate to conserve forest and wildlife by adopting the best practices of these three southern states.”

Officials said Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu excel in forest and wildlife conservation programs, leading to increased wildlife numbers in these states. Khandre stressed the importance of continuing these efforts.

“Cases of wildlife-human conflict rise as residential areas are deforested due to wildlife and population growth. Every being has the right to live, stressing the need for coexistence between forest dwellers and wildlife. We have proposed a joint standard operating procedure (SOP) to manage human-animal conflict.”