

50.79 ha of Kallar corridor declared a private forest

Sale of property on elephant passage will be regulated

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In a step towards the protection of one of the most critical elephant corridors in Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore Collector S. Nagarajan has declared 50.79 hectares of private land in the Kallar corridor area a private forest under the Tamil Nadu Preservation of Private Forests Act, 1949.

This is the first corridor area in the State to be brought under the Act, and the Collector completed the process in 30 days, said D. Venkatesh, District Forest Officer, Coimbatore Forest Division.

Permission needed

Henceforth, sale of property will be regulated and permission has to be obtained for a change in land use. "No person shall reduce the utility of the land as forest... It is very important to monitor the land use in such critical corridors," said I. Anwardeen, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Coimbatore Circle). "The plan of the Forest Department is to bring the entire private land in such corridors under some sort of regulation to ... assist in easy passage of pachyderms..." he said.

Widely known as the Kallar corridor, the Jaccanaire-Hulikal Durgam corridor is situated at the Nilgiri foothills near Mettupalayam. It



Protecting wildlife: This is the first corridor area in the State to be brought under an Act to preserve private forests.

criss-crosses the Mettupalayam-Udhagamandalam road through Coonoor (part of NH-67) at the beginning of the ghat section.

The second edition of *Right of Passage: Elephant Corridors of India*, published by the Wildlife Trust of India, has listed Kallar as one of the corridors with a "high" ecological priority. "Elephants from the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve move to the southern part of the Coimbatore Forest Division through the foothills of highly undulating mountains and cross the corridor between the second hairpin bend of the Mettupalayam-Coonoor Highway and Kallar village. The corridor is very narrow, owing to plantations and various development activities," it says.

According to studies by researchers, the corridor is significant as it connects the Brahmagiri-Nilgiris-Eastern Ghats elephant population

range with the Nilambur-Silent Valley-Coimbatore population range. The movement of elephants between the two ranges facilitates genetic exchange, dispersal and access to a variety of seasonal foraging grounds.

K. Kalidasan of Osai, a Coimbatore-based organisation involved in conservation activities, said the protection of the corridor is a long-pending demand as it is a crucial passage for elephants in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve, which is home to the largest population of the Asiatic elephant. "This is a great step towards securing the corridor."

With over 8,000 vehicles passing through the corridor daily, conservationists have been demanding a flyover from the Kallar Bridge to the second hairpin bend of the ghat section so that elephants can use the natural terrain for undisrupted movement.