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Drone cameras to protect forest and wildlife

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Khammam: The forest department aims at using drones to check the unabated poaching and illegal felling of trees by smugglers from the reserve forests in Khammam and Bhadrachalam –Kothagudem districts.

Forest field personnel have not been able to maintain a strict vigil on entire forest areas. A forest guard has to man 2,500 to 7500 hectares of forests.

The erstwhile Khammam district had 7845.35 square km of forests. Wildlife is being slaughtered in their hundreds every month but only one or two cases are made public by forest officials.

A bison was killed at Patimeedagumpu in Karepalli mandal a month back and two sambar deer were killed in the forests in Enkoor mandal. Another sambar was killed by poachers in Kambampadu. Wild boars and other wildlife are being poached in the forests on a daily basis. Poachers erect live wire and kill wildlife.

A tiger from Adilabad district visited the forests of Khammam twice in 2022 and officials could not track its route. Thousands of professional poachers are living in areas near the forests. Illegal felling of trees is also rampant. In some cases, forest guards catch them while the gangs transport the logs.

Officials say they aim to make use of drone cameras to check the illegal activities in the forests. Khammam district forest officer Siddhartha Singh said, "We plan to give a drone camera for each division. We asked the state government to provide necessary funds for this."

As per the satellite mapping done by the government in 2014, about 17.15 sq-km of forests have been subjected to encroachments in Khammam region. Districts like Warangal and Karimnagar witnessed encroachment of forest lands over 10.94 sq-km, 2.08 sq-km in Nizamabad and Medak districts and 1.13 sqkm in Adilabad district. Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar districts witnessed no encroachments, officials claim.

Based on this, officials started imparting training to the field staff in the use of drone cameras. The cameras can fly over the hills. Vigil can be kept over one to three sq-km a day with these cameras.

The forest department has set up camera traps in some forest areas but it is difficult to identify the poachers with it immediately. But, with drone cameras, the forest guards can be alerted at any moment about illegal activities even in dense forest areas.

Source: <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/111022/drone-cameras-to-protect-forest-and-wildlife.html>