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'Police, Forest and Customs departments should join hands to conserve wildlife'

Staff Reporter



(from left to right) Aruna Basu Sarcar, APCCF and Director, Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, A.K. Viswanathan, Commissioner of Coimbatore City Police, Shekhar K. Niraj, Head, TRAFFIC India and Varun Kapoor, IG and Director PRTS, Indore, at a workshop on "Strengthening Wildlife Law Enforcement and Conservation in India" in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, on Friday. Photo: M.Periasamy.

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The Commissioner felt that wildlife trafficking, considered the third largest crime globally – only next to drugs and arms – could be controlled only if the three forces joined hands.

Police, Forest and Customs departments have individual capacities and these capacities and resources need to be combined to act as one strong force to conserve wildlife, said A.K. Viswanathan, City Police Commissioner, here on Friday.

He was delivering the inaugural address at the two-day workshop on 'Strengthening Wildlife Law Enforcement and Conservation in India' for Forest, Police, Intelligence and RPF officials.

The Commissioner felt that wildlife trafficking, considered the third largest crime globally – only next to drugs and arms – could be controlled only if the three forces joined hands.

About the current scenario, the Commissioner said that tribal people and fishermen who are directly involved in wildlife trafficking and poaching were getting caught. "But we are unable to arrest the key men and international illegal traders," he said and added that the larger organisation should be caught.

Recalling recent incidents of felling sandalwood trees in the city, he said that a few suspects have been named by the forest department. "They are mostly from the tribal communities. After their arrest it is important to counsel them to not indulge in such acts," Mr. Viswanathan added.

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Director of the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, Aruna Basu Sarcar, expressed concern over the importance given only for animals such as lion, tiger and elephants when the issue of poaching arises. She added that there are many other animals such as sand boas and marine wildlife that are neglected, due to lack of awareness.

Shekhar K. Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India – a wildlife trade monitoring network, and the Inspector General of Police and the Director of Police Radio Training School, Indore, Varun Kapoor elaborated on the legal process for better enforcement of wildlife laws.

Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India in Dehra Dun, S.P. Goyal spoke on wildlife DNA forensics and its application in identifying species from seizures – with emphasis on tigers and ivory identification.

Principal Scientist, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, Sunil Kumar Verma spoke on DNA profiling of species.

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