



# “Law of the land must be upheld, as many species are on the verge of extinction”: Dr. Harsh Vardhan

## Sashastra Seema Bal organises seminar on ‘Role of Security Forces in Combating Wildlife Crimes’

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Emphasising the need for spreading awareness and sensitization on crimes against wildlife, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that the law of the land must be upheld, since many species are on the verge of extinction.

Addressing the inaugural session of the seminar on ‘Role of security forces in combating wildlife crimes’ organized by Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), at Vigyan Bhawan here today, Dr. Harsh Vardhan underlined the need for human beings to live in harmony with nature, as an increasing number of animal species are today on the endangered list.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that the job of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is more difficult, since it guards the open borders with friendly neighbouring countries, where force alone cannot be used to enforce the law of the land. He pointed out that development activities have increased tremendously after India’s Independence and in this process, people destroyed the natural abode of wild animals by cutting down forest for agricultural and industrial use. The Minister added that tremendous loss has already been caused to environment and wild animals due to human mistakes. ‘Certain plants and wild animals either have either become extinct, or are on the verge of extinction, if whatever is now left with us is not taken care of, then in the coming days, we will see forests and wild animals only in books’, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said. He appreciated the SSB’s initiative of organising this seminar with sister agencies, NGOs and special dignitaries. The Minister pointed out such seminars enhance inter-departmental co-ordination and in the process, crime against forests and wild animals will be checked. Dr. Harsh Vardhan assured the gathering that the recommendations made during the seminar will be examined by Ministry of Environment & Forests as Action Points for implementation.

In her welcome address, Director General, SSB, Smt. Archana Ramasundaram, made an appeal to all the dignitaries and representatives of sister agencies and NGOs to put forward ideas for formulating a long-term strategy for protection of forest and wild animals. She said that of the total 629 Border Outposts of the SSB, as many as 229 BOPs are located in the classified forested areas. Elaborating the SSB’s efforts in this direction, she said that last year, the force had not only arrested 62 criminals in 60 cases, but had also saved the lives of Tokay- Lizard and sand-boas. Dr. Ramasundaram added that this year, in just 8 months, 85 cases have been registered, while 95 smugglers have been arrested. Apart from these, SSB confiscated body parts of endangered species, deer, Turtles, rabbits, pigeons and elephant tusks.

The purpose of the seminar was to sensitize the CAPF and other stakeholders towards the magnitude of wildlife trade and emphasise the necessity for inter-agency cooperation. ADG, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Smt. Tilotma Verma and other dignitaries attended the seminar.

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