

Gujarat to restore habitat for sloth bears in Jessore

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AHMEDABAD : Gujarat government has taken up a project to provide better habitat to sloth bears by restoring the ecology of Jessore wildlife sanctuary, where more trees will be planted and unwanted vegetation removed.

As per the last census in 2011, nearly 293 sloth bears were found in the state forests.

There is an intense need to create good food habitat for the sloth bears, who mainly eat honey and termites, which can be provided by new plantation, a senior state government official said.

The project aims at planting good amount of trees in the sanctuaries and removing unwanted plant species that have intruded in the habitat.

"There has been encroachment of unwanted vegetation species like Lantenaspp and Prospisjuli-flora, which we call 'Gando Baval' in general language. We will remove these species and plant fruit trees in Jessore," he said.

"The final testing in the forest will be conducted in next monsoon in June or July and after necessary process, the project will be handed over to the forest department," he said.

Following positive results of a pilot project taken up for sloth bears in Banaskantha district by state forest department in coordination with the Gujarat Ecology Commission (GEC), the government has now taken up the new initiative, officials said.

"As the population of sloth bears has increased, attempts are underway to restore ecology of the sanctuary," Gujarat forest minister Mangu Patel told PTI.

"As a human being needs a good house, our wildlife is also entitled to have a good habitat," Patel said.

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