

Interests of farmers living in areas near forests will be protected: Saseendran

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THE HINDU BUREAU

Forest Minister A.K. Saseendran has said that the government is committed to prioritising the interests of farmers living in areas near forests.

He was inaugurating the new rapid response team office building of the Kannur Forest Division and the solar energy hanging fence in the Kottiyur Wildlife Sanctuary here on Tuesday.

The Minister said the government followed a policy that aimed to protect both human settlements and wildlife through long-term scientific projects. “We are working towards

resolving human-wildlife conflicts through efforts to safeguard human life and property while also ensuring the conservation of forests and wildlife,” he added.

Mr. Saseendran highlighted initiatives such as deployment of forest watchers to relocate wild animals that stray into human habitation. Moreover, the Kannur Forest Development Agency has secured the services of a Forest veterinary doctor to improve wildlife care.

The Minister reiterated the government’s commitment to reduce snakebite fatalities to zero by 2026. He also announced plans to expand the ‘Snehahastam’ medical camps for tribespeople and labourers in the Aralam region to 500 camps in collaboration with the Indian Medical Association.

He said several solar energy projects had been launched to address human-wildlife conflicts in areas bordering forests. With the financial assistance of Nabard, ₹129.80 lakh has been allocated for the setting up of solar hanging fences covering 15.8 km across Ayyankunnu, Kottiyur, Aralam, Kelakam and Udayagiri panchayats. Additionally, ₹42.58 lakh has been earmarked for a 5-km solar suspension fence under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana in Ulikal panchayat. A 20.5-km solar energy fence in Ayyankunnu

panchayat, costing ₹177.13 lakh, has been assigned to Kerala Electricals Limited, a public sector institution.

The solar energy fence in Kotiyur Wildlife Sanctuary is expected to provide significant relief to farmers in the area. Once completed, the fences are expected to significantly reduce crop damage caused by wild animals, particularly for farmers in wards 4 and 7 of Kotiyur panchayat.

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