

New minister nixes night safari plan

Vijayashankar's veto is a blow to Tourism Minister Janardhana Reddy

ST-5 / CMS / WS

BANGLORE: Nature lovers opposing the proposed night safari in Bannerghatta national park, have a reason for cheer: Forest Minister C H Vijayashankar has decided to stall the proposal in the interest of wildlife in the protected forest area.

"I will not allow the night safari project in Bannerghatta. The project will be detrimental to wildlife located in the forest...I hail from forest area. I am aware how the project will affect animals," the Minister told reporters on Friday.

He was speaking after taking part in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yeddyurappa to discuss the the issue of providing land rights to forest dwellers. It was Vijayashankar's first official meeting after taking oath as the Minister on Wednesday.

The Forest Minister's move has come as a jolt to Tourism Minister Janardhana Reddy, who had taken keen interest in implementing Rs 180-crore night safari project.

Reddy has been trying to push the project despite stiff opposition from environmental-



ists. The project, first of kind in the country, has been proposed on the lines of Singapore's famous Jurong Park. The aim is

to have a night safari between 6 pm and 10 pm to sight nocturnal wildlife.

A thorough revamping of the

park is proposed for the venture, including construction of pathways, setting up lighting, tourist camping and a state-of-art restaurant.

Charter planes

Plan is also on the cards to introduce charter planes to reach the national park, as it takes at least an hour by road from the City.

The Tourism department plans to attract tourist from across the globe by implementing the project, official sources said.

Environmentalists, however

have argued that the area proposed for the project has been proposed to be implemented is pristine forest and an elephant corridor. The indiscriminate use of vehicles and cameras during the night safari would disturb the wildlife, they have said.

The Bannerghatta national park is a protected forest area spread over 104 sq km. It is habitat for the Asian elephant, 250 species of birds, 20 species of snakes, 150 species of butterflies and 250 different species of plants.

DH News Service