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Maharashtra: Top forest officer blames urban sprawl for conflict, demands space for animals

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PUNE: Man-animal conflict cannot be blamed on the animals as it is happening because humans are encroaching on their space, Sunil Limaye, additional principal chief conservator of forests, said.

“Animals need the space to thrive. We are encroaching due to urbanisation and the conflict will not end,” he said.

Limaye was speaking at a conference on Monday on Human and Wildlife Conflict: Concerns and Resolution organised by Biospheres in association with the department of botany at Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce. The conference was a part of the Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival.

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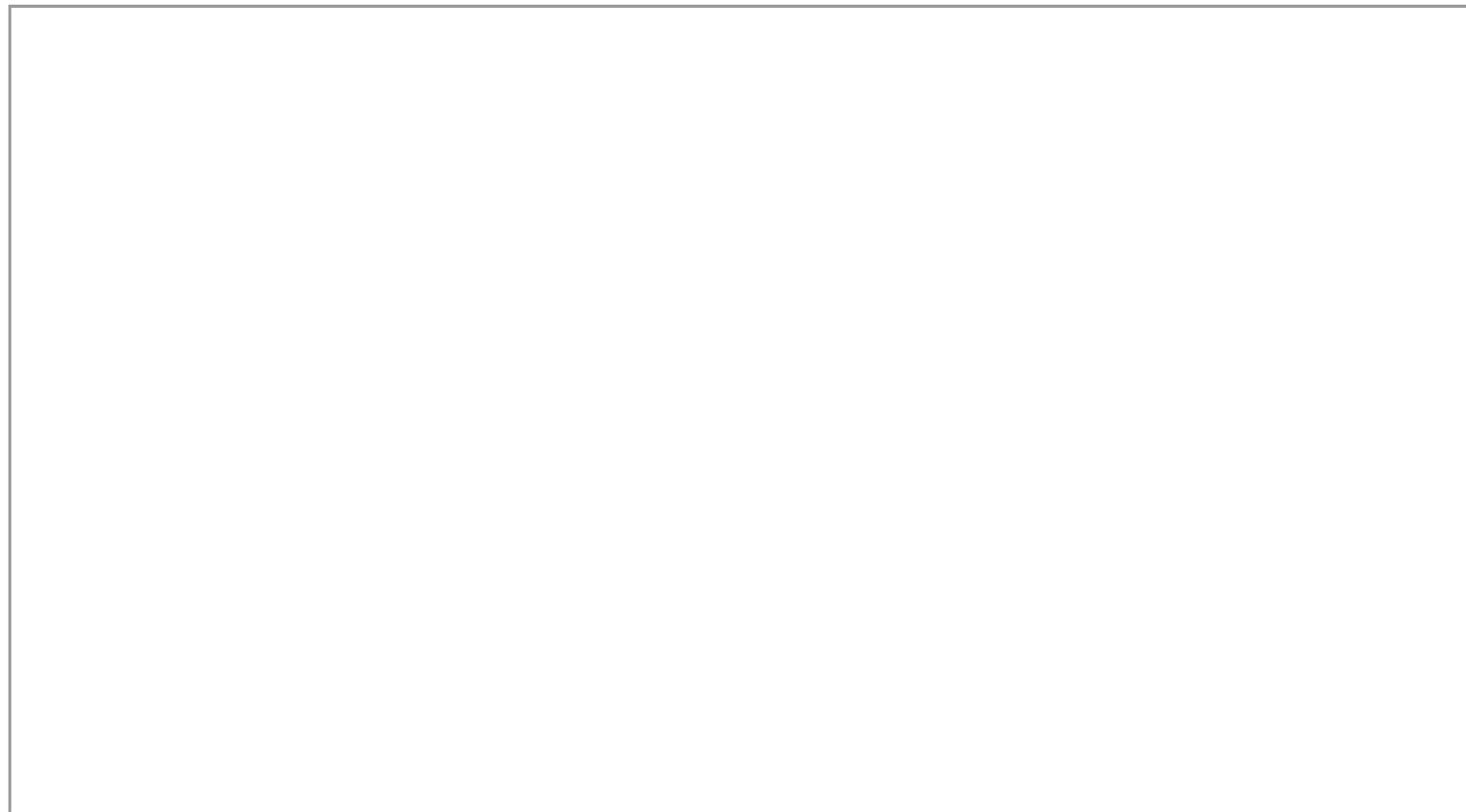
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Sachin Punekar, an ecologist and founder of city-based Biospheres, said urbanisation had caused distress among animals. Ajay Deshmukh, senior veterinary officer at Manekdoh Leopard Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre in Junnar, said leopards are adaptive.

“ They have made sugar cane fields their home and are raising their cubs among these fields. People feel the leopard

population is growing, when in reality they're spreading out. So, we have to decide whether we are ready to co-exist with big cats," Deshmukh said.



Subhash Badve, senior forest officer and an expert in grassland and pasture development, said there's nothing left to eat in the jungle. There are human settlements and encroachments in forests," he said.

Grasslands have to be maintained and protected so the woody growth will increase and thorny spaces will increase. A working