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INDIA NEWS

National wildlife board seeks framing of rules for ecological management

The proposed guidelines should also address the problem of bird mortality due to power lines, the committee said.





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There is a need to frame rules for ecological management of areas affected by power lines and to curb bird mortality, the standing committee of the board decided in its 66th meeting held on December 31. Minutes of the meeting were published last week.

Measures need to be taken to check the growth of invasive weeds like lantana that start growing in the area cleared for installation of power transmission lines, said H S Singh, a member of the board that oversees changes in wildlife habitats.



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The proposed guidelines should also address the problem of bird mortality due to power lines, the committee said.

"Lakhs of birds die every year in India due to collisions with power lines," said Qamar Qureshi, conservation biologist and landscape ecology expert. "This includes the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard."

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Power line mortality is the biggest threat to the iconic bird found in the sparse grasslands of Gujarat and Rajasthan, the Wildlife Institute of India said. If meas such as laying the transmission lines underground in the bird habitats are not undertaken urgently, it could lead to extinction of the species in the next 10-20 years, the government institute said.	sures

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Between January and June 2021, the committee considered 62 proposals in four meetings, out of which 29 proposals were to divert forests within protected areas for other uses, according to an analysis by the Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment, an advocacy group.

The maximum number of proposals (87.96%) were approved for diversion within the linear category covering more than 1,200 ha, the analysis found. Linear projects include transmission lines, roads, railways, pipelines and canals.

In its 66th meeting, the committee approved the diversion of 4.8681 ha of forest land in Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh to lay power lines from Namsai to Miao. The approval is contingent on wildlife protection measures, including bird diverters to minimise avian mortality. The committee also approved