

Rohan Bhate (Shah)

Ex.Honorary Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra Forest Dept., Satara.

Member (Governing Council) – Bombay Natural History Society.

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Member, Committee for Draft Wildlife Action Plan for Maharashtra.

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Ref.No. 0151 / MFD / 2026

By Email

Dt: 08.03.2026

To,

The Chief Wildlife Warden cum Principal chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife)

Maharashtra State

Vanbhavan , Civil Lines , Ramgiri Road,

Nagpur.

Subject: Proposal for Establishment of a Maharashtra Wildlife Crime Control Division

Respected Shri.Srinivas Reddy IFS Sir,

I would like to respectfully place before you a policy suggestion for strengthening wildlife law enforcement in the State of Maharashtra through the establishment of a dedicated **Maharashtra Wildlife Crime Control Division**, on the lines of the highly effective system implemented by the Government of Kerala.

Wildlife crime today has evolved into a sophisticated and organized activity involving illegal hunting, trade in wildlife derivatives, and trafficking networks that often operate across state and international boundaries. Addressing such threats requires specialized intelligence gathering, coordinated enforcement mechanisms, and modern digital systems to track offenders and wildlife offences.

In this regard, the **Kerala Forest Department** has developed and implemented the **HAWK (Hostile Activity Watch Kernel)** system, a centralized digital platform that has been operational since August 2020. The HAWK system serves as a secure and comprehensive portal for documenting wildlife crimes, maintaining offender databases, tracking wildlife deaths, and monitoring ongoing investigations. Developed in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust of India, the platform has significantly improved transparency, intelligence sharing, and accountability by reducing reliance on manual record-keeping and preventing data manipulation.

Alongside this technological intervention, Kerala has also established a **Forest Intelligence Cell (FIC)** dedicated to investigating and preventing serious wildlife crimes such as ivory poaching, organized wildlife trafficking, and sandalwood smuggling. The cell plays a crucial role in gathering intelligence,

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coordinating enforcement operations, and identifying organized criminal networks involved in wildlife crime.

The Kerala Forest Department further strengthens its enforcement framework through close coordination with the **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** and other conservation organizations, enabling regular capacity-building programmes, training of officers in the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, and improved inter-agency collaboration. The success of the HAWK system has been widely acknowledged and has since been adopted by other states such as Karnataka as a pioneering digital tool for strengthening wildlife law enforcement.

Considering the scale and biodiversity importance of Maharashtra, it would be both timely and necessary for the state to establish **a Maharashtra Wildlife Crime Control Division**, supported by a dedicated digital intelligence and monitoring platform similar to the HAWK system. Such a division could focus on intelligence collection, crime analysis, offender database management, coordination with national enforcement agencies, and monitoring of wildlife crime trends across the state.

Further, incorporating the **registration, investigation, and successful prosecution of wildlife offences as a Key Responsibility Area (KRA)** for wildlife officers may significantly improve enforcement accountability and encourage proactive action against wildlife crime.

I would also like to humbly submit that, as a concerned citizen and wildlife enthusiast, I have attempted to assist the Maharashtra Forest Department over the past several years by developing an informal informer network and sharing credible intelligence inputs. Through these efforts, it has been possible to contribute to enforcement actions that have resulted in the arrest of **approximately 175 offenders involved in wildlife crimes**, along with seizures involving scheduled live wildlife species, ivory, tiger skins, leopard skins, antlers, corals, and other wildlife derivatives.

If such results can be achieved through voluntary citizen support and informal intelligence networks, it strongly indicates the enormous potential that a structured, well-equipped, and specialized Wildlife Crime Control Division could achieve under the authority of the Forest Department.

Given Maharashtra's rich biodiversity and the increasing threats posed by wildlife trafficking networks, the creation of **a dedicated Maharashtra Wildlife Crime Control Division** would be a significant and forward-looking step toward

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strengthening wildlife protection and improving enforcement outcomes across the state.

Under your leadership, this initiative could become a model for other states and greatly enhance Maharashtra's capacity to combat wildlife crime in a systematic and technology-driven manner.

I humbly request you to kindly consider this proposal positively.

With respectful regards,

Yours sincerely,



Rohan Bhatе Shah

Ex.Honorary Wildlife Warden