Sectoral Oversight Committee focuses on legal change in wildlife administration to save wild elephants in Sri Lanka

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- **The committee revealed that the number of elephants that are being lost every year due to the elephant-human conflict in this country is high.**

As a country with the highest number of elephant deaths in the world, it has been revealed that there is a serious threat to the wild elephants in Sri Lanka. This matter was brought to the attention of the Sectoral Oversight Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainable Development presided by Hon. Ajith Mannapperuma, Member of Parliament on 24.11.2023.

Accordingly, a committee including Mr. Charaka Jayaratne, the Convenor of the Environmental Law Section of the Sri Lanka Bar Association, discussed with the officials of the Wildlife Department based on the proposals presented to the committee, mainly focusing on the clauses to be amended in the Wildlife and Flora Protection (Amendment) Act.

Attention was paid to some of the main sections related to wild elephants in the Act, where the amendment of Section 3, Section 6, Section 19, Section 20 and Section 30 was discussed. At this time, it was proposed that the penalty fees applicable to the killing of wild animals should be revised and proposals were made to prepare the legal framework necessary to impose appropriate punishments on the relevant offenders by empowering wild elephants as public property.

Also, attention was drawn to the installation of illegal high-voltage power lines as one of the cases where wild elephants die frequently in this country. Since there is no clear interpretation of the Animal and Flora Protection Act in this regard, there was a discussion in the committee about the introduction of new clauses including a clear interpretation and related penalties.

Accordingly, the committee recommended re-recording the existing proposals related to the amendment of the Act discussed in the committee reaching an agreement on the relevant recommendations through a committee established under the Department of Wildlife and finalizing the amendment of the Act under a specific time frame.

Committee members Hon. Jayantha Samaraweera, Hon. Jayantha Katagoda and Hon. Upul Mahendra Rajapaksa also participated in the committee. Also, officials of the Wildlife Department, Railway Department and a group of activists working in relation to elephants participated at the committee.

CHAIRMAN
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