

## **Alien species threaten Indian ecosystems: Government**

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**NEW DELHI:** Invasive alien species like Lantana and Cuscutta pose a threat to the ecosystems and lead to loss of biodiversity of the country, the government today said.

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are non-native to an ecosystem and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health.

"The government is aware of the threats posed by Invasive Alien Species such as Lantana, Parthenium, Cuscutta on ecosystems and biodiversity of the country.

"In the national biodiversity action plan approved by the Union Cabinet on November 6, 2008, biological invasions by exotic species have been discussed as one of the major factors leading to loss of biodiversity in the country," Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar told the Lok Sabha.

He said that in terms of extent of distribution, Lantana is perhaps one of the most important invasive species in forest ecosystems of India and Indian Council of Forest Research and Education Dehradun as part of the exercise to re-evaluate the forest types of India observed that Lantana and Parthenium affected regeneration of teak.

Javadekar said that although there is no conclusive studies in this regard, these invasive species replace native plant species and grasses by adversely affecting their regeneration and growth due to allelopathy effect resulting in reduced biodiversity and availability of food base of wild herbivores like deers.

"Herbivores are considered as the primary consumer of the food chains, at the top of which are tiger and other large carnivores. Therefore, decline in the population of mammalian herbivores has the potential to impact tigers and other large carnivores which are critically dependent on herbivores as prey base," the Minister said.