

## Drones to the Fore to Track Wildlife, Assess Forest Resources

Global GIS consulting firm RMSI partners with Assam govt for fauna, flora protection

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**Chennai:** How does Assam plan to protect its fauna and flora? By using drones to monitor and track wildlife and stray animals, assess forest resources and plantations, prevent poaching, and detect encroachments among others.

The northeastern state has roped in global geographic information systems (GIS) consulting company RMSI to recommend competitive technical specifications for drones to be used for wildlife conservation and forest and plantation monitoring, a top executive at the firm told ET. The company will "evaluate different drone technologies and different platforms to see which is the most appropriate one for wildlife management", Anup Jindal, CEO and joint managing director of RMSI, said.

Assam is among a handful of states to utilise drones for forest management, and its four-year project with RMSI to develop a forest and plantation information management system for the Assam Project for Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) using the latest technologies is perhaps the most extensive one yet in the country.

"This is the first time drones are being used in fulfilling key objectives of wildlife conservation and plantation monitoring, including conducting wildlife surveillance, tracking and monitoring stray animals, detecting encroachments, and assessing forest resources," Jindal said. The idea is to track and protect wildlife and possibly form a blueprint that can be adopted by other states, he said.

For technical evaluation, RMSI has done proof of concept (POC) to validate the feasibility and effectiveness of different drone options and various payloads to oversee and maintain multiple forest resources and wildlife conservation aspects, Jindal said. "The five key objectives for the POC include: monitoring plantations, conducting wildlife surveillance, tracking and monitoring stray animals, detecting encroachments, and assessing forest resources," he said. "Through advanced cameras and sensors, valua-

### Helping Hand

#### HOW CAN DRONES HELP IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION?

India is home to a large number of tigers, leopards, panthers and elephants. Though it welcomes many tourists to its many national parks and reserves every year, it continues to struggle to maintain its wildlife and forest areas, with multiple cases of illegal poaching being registered every year. Drones can be used in the following ways specifically in this regard:



Source: PwC report

#### WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Poaching, illegal trade can be curbed through round-the-clock monitoring of threatened species

#### MANAGING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Regular surveillance of both protected and unprotected forest areas for wildlife movement will reduce the possibility of human and wildlife conflict

#### FOREST PROTECTION

Heat maps generated through thermal sensors can detect forest fires, while time-lapse studies of forest cover can highlight deforestation, afforestation and encroachment

ble data was gathered to generate comprehensive reports on the forest's surveillance, health, and well-being and its inhabitants."

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