

Sri Lanka to ban imports of plastic goods to protect elephants

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Plastic in Sri Lankan landfills has become a major killer of elephants

Sri Lanka will ban the import of most plastic products in a bid to protect wild elephants and deer that die eating the waste, the environment minister announced Friday.

Plastic in Sri Lankan landfills is a major killer of elephants, with autopsies showing kilos of it in the stomachs of animals who died after rummaging at dumps.

Environment minister Mahinda Amaraweera told parliament legislation was being drafted to stop imports of plastic goods, including polythene, that end up in landfills. Officials said it would be introduced within months.

"Plastics are doing untold damage to our wildlife—elephants, deer and other animals," Amaraweera told AFP shortly after his announcement.

"We need to take immediate action to arrest this situation."

Sri Lanka has already banned the manufacture or import of non-biodegradable plastic used for wrapping food and shopping bags since 2017.

Endangered wild elephants are protected in Sri Lanka by law although clashes with farmers are claiming a heavy toll on both sides.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has given wildlife officials two years to implement a plan to reduce human-elephant conflict that has claimed the lives of 607 elephants and 184 people since last year.

Amaraweera said the proposed import ban—that covers mainly toys and household utensils—will be extended to local manufacturing, but did not give a timeline.

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