

World Wildlife Day 2026: India Links Medicinal Plants, Biodiversity & Economic Resilience

India underscores biodiversity leadership as government, industry and communities renew focus on habitat protection and plant heritage



On 3 March, World Wildlife Day places medicinal and aromatic plants at the centre of the global conservation agenda, drawing a clear link between biodiversity protection, public health, traditional knowledge systems and rural livelihoods.

The 2026 theme, 'Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods', draws attention to the ecological and economic value of plant biodiversity. From Ayurveda to modern pharmaceutical research, plant-based remedies continue to underpin healthcare systems worldwide. Conservationists warn that overharvesting, habitat degradation and climate change are placing several species under strain, making sustainable management an urgent priority.

Marking the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India takes pride in its rich faunal diversity and reiterated the country's commitment to conservation and habitat protection. He noted that India is home to over 70 per cent of the world's tiger population, the largest population of the one-horned rhinoceros and the highest number of Asiatic elephants. India also remains the only natural habitat of the Asiatic lion.

The Prime Minister referred to initiatives undertaken in recent years, including the setting up of the International Big Cat Alliance and targeted conservation efforts for species such as the Great Indian Bustard, gharial and sloth bear, as well as the translocation of cheetahs.

Plants And Public Health

The focus on medicinal and aromatic plants expands the conversation beyond flagship wildlife species. These plants contribute significantly to traditional healing systems, support rural and indigenous economies and form part of sustainable value chains. Experts note that protecting such species safeguards both biodiversity and intergenerational knowledge.

World Wildlife Day calls for stronger conservation policies, scientific harvesting practices and greater awareness around biodiversity protection. The emphasis is on integrating ecological considerations into economic planning rather than treating conservation as a standalone concern.

Corporate And Community Partnerships

Industry voices have also underlined the need for collaborative approaches. A Vedanta spokesperson said that biodiversity conservation is foundational to long-term environmental stability, public health security and sustainable economic growth. The spokesperson emphasised the importance of a One Health approach that recognises the interdependence between human, animal and ecosystem health.

The company cited its support for corridor restoration, science-based biodiversity offsets and ecological monitoring in partnership with forest authorities. Through The Animal Care Organisation, supported by Vedanta and anchored under the Anil Agarwal Foundation, conservation initiatives have been undertaken in areas including Kaziranga National Park in Assam and Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. These efforts include strengthening anti-poaching infrastructure, enhancing surveillance systems and supporting frontline forest personnel.

Observers point out that wildlife increasingly moves beyond notified protected areas, heightening the need for monitoring and habitat management across shared landscapes. Ecotourism and nature-linked enterprises, when structured with community participation and revenue-sharing, are seen as potential avenues for aligning conservation with local development.

As World Wildlife Day 2026 draws attention to medicinal plants and biodiversity, the message emerging from policymakers and industry alike is that conservation must be integrated with economic ambition. The protection of wildlife and plant species is framed not only as an environmental imperative but as a long-term investment in public health, livelihoods and national resilience.