

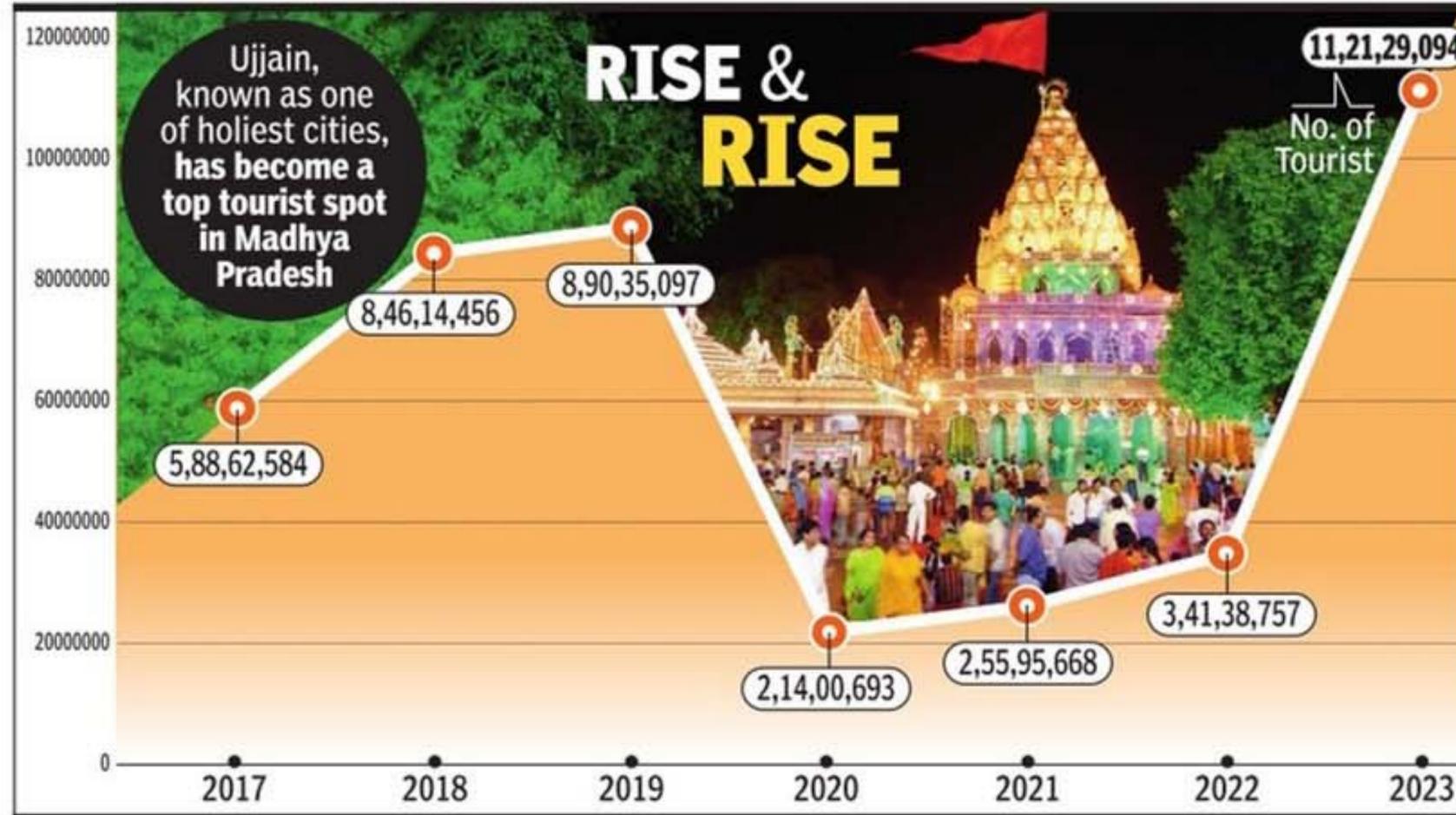
# 11 cr tourists flocked to MP in 2023: Govt

## MP Sees Rise In Religious Tourism

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**Bhopal:** With Madhya Pradesh welcoming over 11 crore (110 million) tourists, the state has become an important tourist destination in the country. In 2023, the state had also created a new record. This remarkable achievement is a significant milestone in Madhya Pradesh's tourism industry. It has surpassed pre-Covid level and established the state as a premier tourist destination in India.

Interestingly, May 24 marks the establishment of Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC), which is al-



so observed as Madhya Pradesh Tourism Day. Last year, Madhya Pradesh saw a significant increase in tourist numbers, with 11.21 crore (112.1 million) visitors, a notable rise from 3.41 crore (34.1 million) tourists in 2022.

Ujjain, known as one of

holiest cities, has become a top tourist spot in Madhya Pradesh, attracting more than 5.28 crore (52.8 million) pilgrims and tourists. Among the top ten most visited places in Madhya Pradesh, five are famous religious sites like Ujjain, Maihar,

Chitrakoot, Omkareshwar and Salkanpur, indicating the increasing interest in spiritual tourism. Significant initiatives such as Mahakal Lok in Ujjain and Ekma Dham in Omkareshwar have been instrumental in drawing a larger number of

tourists to Madhya Pradesh.

Sheo Shekhar Shukla, principal secretary (tourism) MP Tourism Board, said, "The record-breaking tourist arrivals are a testament to Madhya Pradesh's immense appeal as a diverse and enriching travel destination. The continuous emphasis on developing infrastructure, promoting religious tourism, and highlighting our distinctive cultural heritage has played a key role in drawing visitors from all over India and the world. Our dedication lies in improving our tourism offerings even more and guaranteeing that Madhya Pradesh continues to be a preferred destination for travellers in search of memorable and enriching experiences."

Madhya Pradesh offers a diverse range of experiences to various types of travellers, including history buffs, nature enthusiasts, spiritual seekers, and adventure en-

thusiasts. The state of Madhya Pradesh provides a wide array of attractions such as ancient forts, serene temples, wildlife sanctuaries and cultural festivals, making it a perfect destination for travellers looking for a memorable experience. Madhya Pradesh is gaining recognition in global tourism sector. The state welcomes travellers to explore and discover its unique beauty, culture, and hospitality.

Shukla said, "The surge in tourism has had a positive impact on Madhya Pradesh's economy, generating employment opportunities, boosting local businesses, and contributing to overall infrastructure development. The state government's commitment to enhancing tourism infrastructure, promoting cultural heritage, and showcasing the state's natural wonders has been instrumental in driving this growth."

# 80 hectares of Mrugavani National Park disappear into thin air

Submission made by the Telangana Forest Department to the National Green Tribunal; environmentalists fume over the mismatch, and demand an explanation from the government

**Swathi Vaclamudi**  
HYDERABAD

**T**he extent of Mrugavani National Park at Chilkur in Moinsabad mandal has undergone massive revision on paper, resulting in reduction of 80 hectares.

This was revealed in a submission made by the Telangana Forest Department to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) during a hearing pertaining to extra high tension electrical lines being laid through the eco-sensitive zone of the park.

The court ordered a fresh survey of the national park which was first notified in 1998, and during the

survey based on GPS coordinates, it was revealed that the extent was grossly over represented. The fresh survey concludes that the extent is only 280.29 hectares, which is 22% less than the originally notified 360 hectares.

What's more, the Forest department has revealed that a Differential GPS survey was carried out in 2011, during which the extent of the park was ascertained as 287.48 hectares. The massive variation is attributed to the adoption of different techniques for surveying, mapping and area estimating techniques. There is no change in the boundaries from the ones described in the origi-

nal notification, the department contended.

Officials informed that a letter has been addressed to the government about issuing an errata to correct the extent. However, environmentalists fume over the mismatch, and demand an explanation from the government about the same.

"Nearly one-fourth shrinkage of the national park is by no means possible due to change in technique. It requires an independent inquiry by the National Wildlife Board," Sandeep Khurana, an ex-serviceman fighting for protection of the park contended.

Major Khurana also

questions the discrepancy of 6.7 ha between 2011 and 2023, and points out the fact that the park was not even surveyed before it was carved out of the Chilkur forest block.

The NGT, which has pronounced its order on May 21, imposed a penalty of ₹50 lakh on the Transmission Corporation of Telangana for changing the design of the towers from mono poles mentioned in the project proposal to quad poles which were actually installed. The court was not satisfied with the explanation that the change, while reducing costs for the corporation, did not require alterations in requirement of forest

area. Major Khurana also questioned the change of the tower type, and sought to know if the savings by way of such change went to the government or to the contractor.

"TSTransco in its filings in court admitted that the total cost for five mono pole towers was about ₹6.18 crore, while the same for quad towers is ₹1.9 crore. It's not clear who is the beneficiary of the ₹4.28 crore difference," he said.

The petition was filed by Donthi Narasimha Reddy and Mahesh Mamindla, about the project resulting in habitat fragmentation for the wildlife, danger to avian lives, and felling of 1,851 trees for the towers.

# Assam forest dept foils rhino poaching bid; nabs poachers

From Our Special Correspondent

**GUWAHATI, May 23:** Authorities of the Kaziranga National Park carried out a joint operation along with Bokakhat Police, Jorhat Forest Division and Jorhat Police and apprehended a group of rhino poachers.

Sources said the significant achievement stems from a series of coordinated actions initiated from Tuesday, following credible information regarding illicit activities related to the trade of rhino horns within the areas surrounding the Kaziranga National Park.

One of the poachers, Amar Choudhury alias Harilal Choudhury, was apprehended from Jugal Ati village while en route to Bokakhat town.

Disclosures from Choudhury revealed plans for a meeting involving the trade of a rhino horn, scheduled to take place at Palashguri village that evening.

Subsequent joint operation of forest and police led to arrest of Gunakanta Doley who was involved in the said rhino horn trade.

Further investigation and a search at Choudhury's residence conducted with the assistance of Golaghat Police, led to the recovery of six rounds of .303 live ammuni-

tion concealed in between a bamboo clump in his backyard.

Choudhury later identified Achinta Morang, alias Empe Morang, as the main mastermind behind the group.

Acting on Choudhury's information, Achinta Morang was apprehended from Kareng Chapori, Jorhat, with assistance of Jorhat Police and Jorhat Forest Division.

Morang's interrogation revealed that a .303 rifle and three rounds of ammunition were obtained for hunting a rhino in the chapori (riverine) area of Majuli.

Based on prima facie evidence of involvement in the attempted rhino poaching, illegal possession of wildlife articles, and the attempted trade of rhino horns, an offence has been registered against the accused under relevant sections of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Wildlife (Protection) (Assam Amendment) Act, 2009.

Meanwhile, the state forest department has stepped up vigilance in the wake of the development in its commitment to protect the rich wildlife of Kaziranga National Park and ensure that the perpetrators of wildlife crimes are brought to justice.

# Athiabari Forest Range Officer in trouble

OUR CORRESPONDENT

**KOKRAJHAR, May 23:** As the State government is acting tough on corruption and bribery, a Range Officer-Kankan J. Kaushik of Athiabari Forest Range in eastern part of Raimana National Park under Kachugaon Forest Division is in trouble for alleged involvement in bribery with two youths who were caught by the forest guards in upper stream of Hell River under Raimana National Park recently. A case has been filed and registered at Serfanguri Police Station.

The FIR against the Range Officer, Konkon Kaushik was lodged at Serfanguri police station by Nirenta Basumatary and Sudem Basumatary of Belguri village under Serfanguri police station on May 20 against physical assault on them and demand of bribery by the forest officials for their release. They were accompanied by the members of Bodoland Janajati Suraksha Mancha (BJSM) during filing of FIR.

According to the sources, one Nirenta Basumatary of Belguri village under Serfanguri police station and Prajit Brahma of Thaisaoguri village of the same Police Station went to upper stream of Hell River under Raimana National Park on May 14 to check the drying up of river bed as the entire area is currently facing acute drinking

water scarcity since the past two months. The team of forest guards saw them and detained them suspecting them to be poachers and brought them to Athiabari Forest Range Office in the evening at 3 pm. They said they were physically assaulted by the forester and forest guards led by Amrit Newar of Patgaon. They also alleged that they were asked to pay a sum of Rs. 1 lakh each by the forest officials in the presence of Range officer Kankan J. Kaushik for their release.

Nirenta Basumatary is presently working at a private company in Kerala and he came to his home to cast vote recently while Prajit Brahma, a first semester student of Janata College, Serfanguri who was also detained from the same spot on the same day went to upper stream Longa River to study the river water level as the villages in the locality have been facing water crisis from last month when the forest guards led by Amrit Newar surrounded them on suspicion of being poachers and badly assaulted them.

They also narrated that both of them were taken away to Athiabari Forest Range Office at around 8 pm and were assaulted again till 9 pm and kept overnight there in the room where there is no electricity. Without handing them over to the police, next morning at 7 am both of

them were moved to Kachugaon Hospital for medical examination and were taken back to Divisional Forest Office, Kachugaon. Again at 1 p.m. on May 15, they were brought back to Range Office, Athiabari. They alleged that on the same day the Range Officer and Forester demanded Rs. 1 lakh each from the family members and villagers who came to approach for their release at the Range office, Athiabari in the presence of Range Officer Kankan J. Kaushik failing of which they would be sent to jail. The poor family members were given little time to collect the amount. As the families are economically poor, they requested the forest officials to reduce the amount and accordingly, the forest officials agreed to release the youths on payment of Rs. 60,000 each. Later, the family members of Prajit Brahma and sister of Nirenta Basumatary, Sudem Basumatary Koch could manage Rs. 1, 20,000 and the amount was handed over to the forest officials.

Meanwhile, talking to this correspondent, the working president of the BJSM-DD Narzary said he went to Athiabari Forest Range Office and called on Range Officer Kankan J. Kaushik on May 15 in the evening and inquired the reasons of detention of two youths and subsequent physical torture on inno-

cent youths. He said he had requested the Range Officer Kankan J. Kaushik to return the money taken in the name of release from the two youths of poor families. He also said the Range Officer assured him to return the amount by May 16 or May 18 but until May 19, they failed to give back the amount and thus the FIR was lodged on May 20 against the Range Officer and forest officials. He questioned as to why the Range Officer did not forward the file to police if the youths were found committing offence. He also questioned what was the reason to keep them overnight in the Range Office if they have no faults and if they violated the rules then why the offenders were not handed over to police. He further said the medical reports had confirmed the physical torture and the OC of Serfanguri PS had already taken statements from the two youths and forest officials regarding the entire episodes.

Narzary strongly advocated that the Range Officer of Athiabari Range Kankan J. Kaushik and two foresters must be taken action as per law of the land to ensure that all the relevant provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) act, 1989 is incorporated. He also demanded that the forest officials should be arrested

for indulging in forceful bribery as an act of gross violation of Anti-Corruption laws in India subject to relevant sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Prevention of Money laundering Act, 2002 and suspension of their services.

On the other hand, the Range Officer of Athiabari Range Kankan J. Kaushik, currently on leave while talking to this correspondent, said the youths were detained for entering a restricted area of Raimana National Park. He said no one would be allowed to enter the National Park zone without prior permission as per Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. The act is a comprehensive legislation enacted by the Government of India for the protection of wildlife. It has several provisions aimed at conserving and protecting wildlife and their habitats. He also said the allegations of demand of bribery from the youths was totally false and politically motivated.

When asked if the forest guards recovered any substance or implements from the detained youths, J. Kaushik replied that they did not find any materials from the youths but they were detained on suspicion for entering the wildlife zone without permission. Regarding the physical assault, he said no one could claim it unless the medical report is out.

# 'CIDCO has a week to bring flamingos back'

Airoli MLA Ganesh Naik visits DPS Lake in Nerul to inspect the drying flamingo habitat

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**NAVI MUMBAI:** Following several complaints from residents and environmentalists that a flamingo habitat along Palm Beach Road in Nerul is being affected due to blockage of creek water entering the wetlands, Ganesh Naik, the Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Airoli, on Thursday threatened the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) of demolishing its road that's causing the lake to dry.

During an inspection tour of the 30-acre DPS Lake, located next to the NRI Colony on Thursday, Naik gave a deadline of a week to CIDCO chief engineer NC Bias to ensure the area is once again buzzing with flamingos. During his visit, Naik brought construction officials along with him who brought heavy machinery, including a JCB machine to demolish the road, but after CIDCO officials assured him of action, Naik gave



Ganesh Naik condemned the actions of individuals who blocked the water flow into the lake.

them a deadline to restore regular water flow. Failure to do so, he said, will result in the removal of obstacles obstructing the water path. Explaining how the CIDCO road construction affected the flamingo habitat, the director of Natconnect Foundation, an NGO devoted to environmental causes, BN Kumar said, "There were eight cement pipes through which water from the creek flowed back and forth till about five years ago before the road construction. That main

water channel has been buried now making the lake dry and resulting in rapid decline of flamingos."

Around four years ago, the Bombay high court on a petition of Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society gave protection to the lake and directed CIDCO to ensure water flow continues here, despite this, the planning authority built a road which blocks the water flow.

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate



BACHCHAN KUMAR/ HT PHOTO

Change has now asked the state environment department to probe into the charges of sabotaging the lake and report. Meanwhile, the HC-appointed Mangrove Protection and Conservation Committee has called Kumar for a site inspection next Wednesday.

Naik said, "This city has been named Flamingo City as they flock here in thousands to the water bodies. However, the situation has drastically changed due to the destruction of natural

habitats and rapid construction. Hardly 5% of flamingoes can be seen now." Naik also added, "When the Atal Setu was constructed to provide faster travel to Alibaug and Goa, what is the need of the jetty here to provide the RoRo service? The road cuts through a mangrove area disturbing the flora and fauna."

Naik condemned the actions of individuals who blocked the water flow. He reassured citizens that collective efforts will prevent any attempt to compro-

mise the environmental integrity of Navi Mumbai.

"If that doesn't happen, I shall drive the heavy machinery and demolish the road to let the water in. This is not a political stunt, otherwise I would have come before the election," said Naik. Former corporator Netra Shirke, a resident of the area, said, "CIDCO cares little for the environment and flamingos. For them, it is all about real estate. Several flamingos have died in the area recently, including deaths by hitting the Nerul jetty signboards." The blockage of inlets, said Shirke, is a major conspiracy by the authorities. "We as citizens have collectively been opposing it and with Naik's support, we shall ensure the lake is restored," she said

Rekha Sankhala of Save Flamingos and Mangroves group said that people's movement with the support of a strong leader will hopefully get CIDCO to do the right thing.

BN Kumar concluded that CIDCO has repeatedly claimed this is not a wetland or a natural water body to further its plans for commercial development here by selling plots in this most prime area of the city.

HT reached out to CIDCO, however, the officials refused to comment on the issue.

# **Cops file FIR for sacrificing chicken in temple on PETA plaint**

**MYSURU, DHNS:** Mysuru Police have filed an FIR for sacrificing a chicken in a temple following a complaint by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India.

After learning that a chicken had been sacrificed at Sri Pratyangira Yogeshwari Bhagavati Temple in Yelwala, Mysuru, PETA India worked with Mysuru Rural police officials to register a first information report (FIR).

The sacrifice was video recorded and carried out in full public view.

The FIR has been registered at Yelwala police station, under Sections 3, 5, and 6 of Karnataka Prevention of Animal Sacrifices Act, 1959, and Sections 34 and 429 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, against an unknown person.

PETA India cruelty response coordinator Sinchana Subramanyan said, "Animal sacrifice is both cruel to animals and dangerous to society. It desensitises people to violence, while reinforcing obsolete beliefs that hinder progress. Just as human sacri-

fice is now treated as murder, the archaic practice of animal sacrifice must end."

"The Supreme Court has ruled that animals can be slaughtered only in licensed slaughterhouses and that municipal authorities must ensure compliance with this ruling. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001, and the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, permit the slaughter of animals for food, only in licensed slaughterhouses, equipped with species-specific stunning equipment," Sinchana said.

Gujarat, Kerala, Puducherry and Rajasthan already have laws, prohibiting religious sacrifice of any animal in any temple or its precinct. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana prohibit it in any place of public religious worship or adoration or its precinct or in any congregation or procession connected with religious worship on a public street.

# Discreet charm of the exotic



**Citizens want 100 Conocarpus trees planted around lake to be removed as studies have shown these to be harmful to health**

**| Garima Prasher**  
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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

**N**early 100 trees planted by the Forest Department of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) around Subramanyapura Kere in Jayanagar last year have caught local attention. Residents say they would like the civic agency to remove these plants from the lake's premises.

This is after a city-based NGO surveyed saplings planted around Subramanyapura Kere. As per the survey results, 350 out of nearly 400 trees in the lake premise are exotic. Out of the 350 exotic species, 92 are Conocarpus trees, a species that has been banned in Gujarat.

Used as an ornamental and avenue tree, Conocarpus was banned in forest and non-forest areas such as nurseries and plantations by the Gujarat Forest Department in September last year. The Department had cited harm to the environment and human health as the primary cause for banning this exotic species.

However, nearly a 100 trees of the same species growing in their

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>**

## Go native, while planting trees

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

backyard have made residents of the area anxious.

"There are many research papers and scientific evidence on the harmful impact of this tree on human health. After receiving the results of the tree survey conducted by ActionAid Association, we did our research and found out that pollen from this tree species causes respiratory problems and lung disorders. Residents want these trees removed," said Bhuvan Raj K, a resident of the area.

Notably, the circular issued by the Gujarat Forest Department highlights that pollen of Conocarpus leads to cold, cough, asthma, and allergies among individuals, particularly during winter.

When BM reached out to officials from the Forest Department, they said, "We planted a few saplings of Conocarpus around parks and as avenue trees last year. This was before the Gujarat Forest Department imposed the ban. We are not planting Conocarpus anymore."

Botanists and tree experts say BBMP should not only stop planting tree species with established harmful impacts but must explore biological methods to eliminate these species.

"We faced a similar situation with Parthenium when the weed had started taking over vacant space and its pollen caused adverse health impacts such as asthma and respiratory disorder. Scientists from GKVK then suggested other shrub species that could eliminate Parthenium when grown alongside. This technique is called allelopathy, whereby a native plant eliminates unwanted weeds by releasing chemicals through its roots," said Ravindra Reshme, a city-based botanist.

Locals also raised concerns about the dominance of other exotic tree species in BBMP's plantation drives.

"Nearly 90% of the saplings planted in Subramanyapura Kere are exotic. Long stretches of the lake have the same tree species. This goes on to show that BBMP's plantation drives are not scientific," said another resident of the area.

City-based lake activists say there is a need to opt for native species of shrubs, plants, and trees that can provide food and habitat for wildlife. BBMP's Forest Department, Horticulture, and Fisheries Department should try to grow native species to improve biodiversity at the local as well as city levels.

"Not just trees and shrubs, the Fisheries Department should involve local fishermen and encourage them to go for native fish. This will attract more birds and improve biodiversity. Lakes can be developed as biodiversity hotspots, provided all the departments of BBMP are working in coordination while focusing on ecological or biodiversity aspects," said Raghavendra B Pachhapur of ActionAid Association.

"We have many exotic species, not just around lakes and along the roads, but even in parks such as Cubbon Park and Lal Bagh. We must stop planting exotic species and focus on native trees. Although native trees grow slower, they are an excellent choice for biodiversity," added Reshme.

# Dry Aravalli ponds refilled so animals can drink water

Leena Dhankhar

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**GURUGRAM:** The Gurugram wildlife department has started refilling ponds in the Aravallis that have dried up to prevent wild animals, including leopards, jackals and foxes, from straying into residential areas in search of water, officials aware of the matter said on Thursday.

“We checked the water availability [in the Aravalli] but all the resources were dried up. We have begun refilling these ponds and laying pipelines to ensure a consistent water supply for the wildlife. The initiative is to ensure that wild animals have sufficient water sources within their natural habitat to reduce the chances of human-wildlife encounters,” Gurugram wildlife inspector Rajesh Chahal said.

A comprehensive survey is also being conducted to assess the status of natural water sources in the Aravallis.

“This survey will identify and rehabilitate other potential water bodies that could support



Officials refilling a natural pond near Khod village. PARVEEN KUMAR/HT

wildlife, preventing them from seeking water in human-inhabited areas,” Chahal said.

Officials said the waterbodies dry up every summer, increasing the possibility of animals wandering into human settlements. The department previously used tankers, which would be manually refilled by the villagers.

Satyaparkash Singh, village sarpanch of Khod village, said

they ensure that enough water is stored in the outskirts of the village for the wildlife.

“The recent rise in temperature has increased the water demand, prompting wild animals to enter the village. We have stored enough water at various points outside the village... We have also assigned some people to check and refill these water points daily,” said Singh.

# Dung decay vital for elephant census

**BOSKY KHANNA** @Bengaluru

AS the southern states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh started the three day long elephant census on Thursday, May 23, experts and scientists pointed that there is a need to include the dung decay rate (DDR) method for the statistics.

Karnataka had started the DDR assessment from April, experts pointed that this should be done annually, in all states, instead of once in five years.

Noted elephant expert R Sukumar, who is helping in the assessment, told TNIE that the

DDR assessment will give a clearer picture, help understand the landscape, climate change, weather, rainfall pattern, the jumbo's health and their migratory pattern. "Since the weather and habitat will vary in each state, long-term assessment will help draw a pattern and a trend," he added.

The DDR should start six months before the elephant census starts. It should be done on a regular basis, and a log should be maintained. It is a long term exercise, where the field staff should first find

fresh dung, mark it, and assess it every two weeks.

Explaining the need of the elephant population estimation, Sukumar said, a standard methodology and bench mark is being followed for uniform assessment in all the states. The exercise will help in better conflict management and improve co-ordination among the states. Compared to other parts of the country, elephant management is better in the southern states. The number of deaths and habitat loss is also less, he added. Experts had suggested the



ministry of environment forests and climate change (MOEFCC) for inclusion of the DDR assessment technique, but any decision is yet to be taken.

The elephant census is being conducted in 10 forest divisions of Kolar, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, BRT Tiger Reserve, Bannerghatta National Park, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Nagarahole Tiger Reserve, Madikeri Territorial division, Madikeri Wildlife Sanctuary and Virajpet. A total of 65 forest ranges and 563 beats are being assessed by 1,689 staffers.



# Elephant census begins at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in TN

**PNS ■ ERODE (TAMIL NADU)**

The Tamil Nadu forest department on Thursday commenced a three-day-long elephant census at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve as part of the state-wide initiative, officials said.

Around 300 forest officials are deputed to conduct the census in ten forest ranges at STR.

All precautionary measures are being taken, like providing firearms for enumerators to safeguard them from animal attack, drinking water and food, officials said.

The forest officials will conduct the census from 6 am to 6 pm daily till Saturday.

This second synchronised Elephant Population Estimation 2024 which began today will cover 26 forest divisions in 697 blocks, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment Climate Change and Forests, Supriya Sahu said.

The estimation will be done

simultaneously in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, she said in a post on the social media platform X.

"The first synchronised estimation done in 2023 in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala had estimated a population of 2,961 elephants in TN. A total of 1,836 forest staff and 342 volunteers are participating in this exercise [Video - @supriyasahuia](#) #TNForest #Elephantestimation," Sahu said posting a video.

Five tiger reserves spread across the state have been included in the elephant census covering the forest areas from Hosur to Kanyakumari. The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) has also been included in the census.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Srinivas R Reddy, and Chief Conservator of Forests and field director of MTR, D Venkatesh, were among the officials involved in the annual exercise.

**The Assam Tribune**

**Guwahati, 24 May 2024**

# **Elephant census begins in Tamil Nadu**

ERODE (Tamil Nadu), May 23: The Tamil Nadu forest department on Thursday commenced a three-day-long elephant census at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, officials said.

Around 300 forest officials are deputed to conduct the census in ten forest ranges at STR.

All precautionary measures are being taken, like providing firearms for enumerators to safeguard them from animal attack, drinking water and food, officials said.

The forest officials will conduct the census from 6 am to 6 pm daily till Saturday. – PTI

### Love in Vietnam

The poster of Shantanu Maheshwari's upcoming film 'Love in Vietnam' was unveiled on Thursday at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. The actor, who made his debut at the prestigious event, shared that he had always dreamed of attending Cannes for his work. Shantanu said: "It feels amazing."

### Varun campaigns for mom

BJP leader and Pilibhit MP Varun Gandhi reached Sultanpur on Thursday to campaign for his mother Maneka Gandhi who is in the fray from the seat on a BJP ticket. Addressing a poll meeting, Varun Gandhi highlighted the close connection of her mother with the people of Sultanpur.

### Elephant census

The Tamil Nadu forest department on Thursday commenced a three-day-long elephant census at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, officials said. Around 300 forest officials are deputed to conduct the census in ten forest ranges at STR. All precautionary measures are being taken, including providing firearms to the enumerators.

# Elephant population enumeration commences in Karnataka

It is being held in the forests bordering all southern States. In BRT Tiger Reserve, 170 staff have been deployed for it

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MYSURU

**H**undreds of Forest Department personnel fanned out across 10 forest divisions of Karnataka for the synchronised elephant population enumeration of southern States, which got under way on Thursday.

Though parts of Bandipur and other areas received heavy showers, the exercise was not affected, according to Ramesh Kumar, Conservator of Forests, Project Tiger.

The three-day exercise, which will conclude on May 25, is a fallout of the Inter-State Coordination Committee (ICC) charter which was unveiled at a meeting of senior Forest Department personnel



Forest Department personnel engaged in elephant enumeration exercise at Bandipur on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and Ministers of Karnataka and Kerala, at Bandipur in March this year.

The objective is to prepare a database of elephant population in the

forests bordering Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh to ascertain the population dynamics that will help conceive mitigatory measures

to reduce human-elephant conflict and those involving other wild animals.

However, places such as Hassan and Chikkamagaluru – despite being epicentres of human-elephant conflicts – have been left out of the exercise as the forests in these regions are not contiguous to jungles of the neighbouring States.

According to authorities, there have been 22 human deaths caused by elephants between January and May this year in Karnataka while four additional deaths were caused by other wild animals.

During the same period 25 elephants have also died in the State though 23 deaths have been attributed to natural causes and the others to unnatural causes.

Some of the forest divisions of Karnataka where the elephant population enumeration exercise was carried out included Bandipur, Nagarahole, BRT Tiger Reserve, Bannerghatta National Park, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, M.M. Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, Madikeri Wildlife Division, and Madikeri Territorial Division, Virajpet division, apart from Kolar.

The first day of the elephant enumeration exercise was block sampling or direct count exercise which entailed each of the teams to survey regular beats and cover an area of 5 sq km noting down records of elephant sighting and enter the data. “The teams returned by 6 p.m. and had significant sightings though the numbers

etc., will be known only after analysis of data and will take some time,” Mr. Ramesh Kumar added.

On Friday, the field staff will conduct line transect exercise and each team will walk a distance of 2 km recording data on either side of the transect line. The water hole count exercise will be taken up on Saturday where elephant enumeration will be taken up from an observation point established at different points from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The results will be analysed by scientists of Indian Institute of Science.

In BRT Tiger Reserve, 170 staff have been deployed for the exercise while more than 300 staff are taking part in Nagarahole and about similar numbers in Bandipur.



# Foolproof security!

What fears can the jungle hold, when you're cradled in love?

For an elephant, family is a huge deal! While the complex social relationships in an elephant herd has been a subject of study by experts for long, the general public never tires of touching examples of bonding between calves and their mothers and other females in a herd. The latest video to set social media in 'aww' mode is one captured by wildlife photographer Dhanu Paran deep in the forests of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu, and posted by Supriya Sahu, IAS.

The 15-second video shows a tiny calf sleeping peacefully, surrounded by adult and adolescent elephants. Though the older pachyderms also seem to be sleeping, they are in protective formation around the baby, providing it what Sahu describes as "Z class security."

The baby occasionally stirs, checking that his loved ones are close by, much like a human baby would. "Wonderful and rare sight to see such beautiful things. Amazing. Thanks for showing us," commented one user, on Sahu's post. "Made my day," said another, while a third suggested that the clip could be used to create wildlife awareness among the younger generation.

Scientists have recorded that elephant herds are mostly comprised of females, and led by a matriarch. The adult females and adolescents in the group often collectively care for the calves. Herds are also known to close ranks around the young and vulnerable members in the face of danger, demonstrating an advanced level of social commitment.

# Govt to carve out Balpakram land for highway expansion

By Our Reporter

**SHILLONG, May 23:** Choosing development over the protection of environment, the state government will slice off 2.548 hectares of land from the ecologically sensitive Balpakram National Park (BNP) in Garo Hills for the expansion of the State Highway 4 from Maheshkhola to Kanai.

A notification issued by the Commissioner and Secretary of Forest & Environment Department, Pravin Bakshi said, "In exercise of the powers conferred under sub-section (6) of Section 35 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and after consultation with the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, the Governor of Meghalaya authorises the Chief Wildlife Warden, Meghalaya to grant a permit for diversion of 2.548 hectares of land within the Balpakram National Park for up-gradation to two lane of a portion of the State Highway-4 from Maheshkhola to Kanai located between existing kilometers 59.270 to 85.970 and having a total design length of 1.520 km within the national park under SARDP-NE Phase A".

The diversion granted is subject to several conditions recommended by the Stand-

ing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife.

One of the conditions is that since the area falls under wildlife area, there should not be any hindrance to the movement of animals. Another condition stated that night vision signboard should be erected by the user agency for the crossing zones.

Some other conditions are that rumble strips should be constructed at the vulnerable areas to reduce the speed of vehicles; the user agency should not dump the excess earth cutting into the Kanai river as it may affect the flow; labour camps should not be set up within the BNP area and they will carry out the work from outside the BNP area and that the user agency should construct within the ROW (within the prescribed limit).

The user agency has been also asked to implement the animal passage plan, prepared in accordance with the guidance document – "Eco-friendly measures to mitigate the impacts of linear infrastructures on wildlife".

The BNP is situated near the tri-border of Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and Bangladesh. It was declared as a national park by the then Governor of Meghalaya Bhisma Narain Singh on January 31, 1986 **(Contd on P-4)**

## Govt to carve out Balpakram land...

**(Contd from P-1)** and inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on December 27, 1987.

Balpakram is a place of immense importance in the folklore of the Garos and considered sacred by the Garo forefathers and ancestors. It is believed that the soul of a dead person passes through Balpakram in its journey to afterlife.

Balpakram's unchartered jungles, massive cliffs and powerful rivers have birthed many stories of the paranormal type, including that of the stalking "mandeburung", or man of the jungle, straight out of the cryptozoologist's handbook.

The BNP is also a treasure trove of animal and plant life, including the endangered wild water buffalo. It is designated as the "land of the spirits" in local folklore.

important to be open to immersive experiences and discoveries beyond traditional itineraries that can transform your worldview." As the globetrotter believes in stepping out of her comfort zone, hiking a volcano had been on her bucket list—until she struck it off in Guatemala. "While I'd always been intrigued by the country's rich culture, the Acatenango volcano ultimately brought me there. The eight-hour-long guided volcanic trek

## Here's why travel is the best investment you can make

Redefined by purpose and passion, bespoke journeys are high on people's agendas. It's time to broaden your horizons with uncharted adventures, bucket list experiences, wellness escapes, and other globetrotting aspirations



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

### YOUR TICKET TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

Like many others, Khyati Thaker, a lawyer turned travel curator, considers travelling to be an investment in her happiness and growth. She suggests, "It's

pushed me beyond my limits. However, on reaching the summit, I felt an immense sense of accomplishment, unlike anything I've ever felt before. The panoramic vistas of the



neighbouring Volcán de Fuego, with its clouds of smoke, also left me in awe of nature's power," she recalls.

### CHASING ADVENTURES

As more people view travel as a means of learning and discovery, offbeat escapes are in the spotlight. Speaking about her 11-day excursion to Antarctica, Raksha Nagaraj, co-founder of an adventure travel community, shares, "Being an admirer of wildlife, it felt like a magical dream to observe penguins, whales, and seals in their natural habitat, while taking care not to disturb these creatures."

She also hoped to witness the northern lights, which led her to Norway. Unfortunately, rain foiled her group's plans, leading them to venture two hours farther. "We built a campfire in the middle of nowhere and were amazed to

peer up and see the surreal aurora borealis, in green and orange, dancing in the night sky. I was so mesmerised by this otherworldly spectacle that I forgot to take pictures."

### WISH LIST VOYAGE

It has become increasingly popular to curate journeys around personal events, be it anniversaries or other milestones. For instance, Aditi Sadana, a marketer, observes the ritual of taking trips on her birthday. She details, "It's

something I look forward to every year. Experiences, such as attending cultural fairs, discovering hidden gems, or staying at properties owned by locals, allow me to connect with the destination on a deeper level." Given her interests, it's not surprising that Sadana attended a well-known annual electronic music festival with her close friends. "Partaking in this event in Boom, Belgium, on my birthday was a dream come true. I forged many new connections with people from around the world." For Sadana, travel is a means of wellness and relaxation, so visiting Kerala was truly special. She says, "It was rejuvenating to spend time in the scenic backwaters and receive Ayurvedic massages, a popular offering in the region."

Remember: investing in travel is to invest in yourself, so get ready to transform your life and fulfil your aspirations—whatever they may be.

### LET YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY BE ABOUT:

- Personal exploration and gaining insights into who you are
- Prioritising your health and well-being
- Celebrating your interests such as attending a sports tournament, musical concert, etc.

— Sheetal Jain, founder and CEO of a luxury market intelligence firm

■ Saundarya Jain  
@timesgroup.com

No longer limited to being a leisure activity, travel has become a deeply personal journey of

self-discovery and exploration. Sheetal Jain, founder and CEO of a luxury market intelligence firm, affirms, "While some choose popular vacation spots, others prioritise their

self-actualisation needs to explore the world based on their interests—be it scuba diving enthusiasts heading to Costa Brava or wildlife lovers holidaying in Maasai Mara."

**The airport is surrounded by feeding and roosting sites. Black kites, cormorants and storks are commonly spotted on the premises**

ASRA MAVAD  
TEAM METROLIFE

**B**engaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL) has a dedicated department to handle hazardous situations involving birds on the premises.

In the wake of dozens of flamingos getting killed while flying over Ghatkopar in Mumbai, *Metrolife* spoke to BIAL officials about protocols they have in place to avoid such incidents. Bird hits are commonplace but can be critical (see box).

The Kempegowda International Airport is surrounded by feeding and roosting sites for many bird species.

# How does BLR airport keep birds at bay?



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

“Hence, bird sightings are not unusual. Commonly seen birds include black kites, brahminy kites, cormorants, darters, storks, black-shouldered kites, pigeons, lapwings, common coots, egrets, pond herons, small green bee-eaters, Indian robins, and Indian rollers. The species vary with the seasons,” says a BIAL spokesperson.

Their Bird Air Strike and Hazard Management department is staffed with experts to deal with incidents such as bird hits.

“A Wildlife Hazard Management Plan has been developed and implemented according to International Civil Aviation Organization and Directorate General of Civil Aviation

guidelines. All bird and wildlife movements are monitored in real-time, with trained personnel deployed at various locations to implement appropriate scaring measures. Additionally, several passive measures ensure the area remains non-conducive to wildlife and birds. As a result, there have been no serious bird strike incidents affecting

aircraft at the Bengaluru airport,” they add. Manual scaring techniques and distress signals are among these measures.

“Bird movements are monitored by scanning critical and surrounding areas with binoculars. Information on bird presence is then relayed to bird scarers. These bird scarers use deterrent measures like noise-making equipment,” shares another BIAL source.

However, the most efficient measure is to keep the premises hygienic, says a senior pilot with an Indian budget airline. “Often, airports use loud crackers

and scarecrows to keep the birds at bay but birds still come flocking near the runway due to lack of sanitation. Some airports in India fail to follow hygiene standards. But Bengaluru airport is one of the better ones,” he notes.

He says the airport premises should also steer clear of any form of vegetation. “Even if there is some vegetation growing in a remote corner, it will attract birds and animals. It is important to keep the grass at a certain length. This will ensure the birds don’t have much to feed on, plus it offers better visibility (for keeping a tab on birds),” he explains.

## FLAMINGOS AND A BOEING 777 IN MUMBAI

On Monday night, 39 flamingos from a huge flock died after they were hit by a passenger aircraft over Ghatkopar while it was descending to land at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai. The Boeing 777 had over 300 passengers and landed safely, with no injury to crew members or passengers.

### Why are bird strikes feared?

Bird strikes are among the most common threats to aircraft safety. They typically occur during take off and landing. Such incidents can distract the pilot, or even lead to the ingestion of birds into the aircraft engine. The latter can destroy the rotary blades and cause an airflow reversal.

# Jumbo census takes off in Chittoor, Annamayya

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHITTOOR/RAJAMPETA

The three-day elephant census kicked off on Thursday, May 23, with a positive start in the forests of Kuppam, Palamaner, Chittoor East and West, and Karveti Nagaram ranges of Chittoor district.

Chittoor, which borders the forests of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, houses the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary at the Kuppam-Palamaner junction.

Established in Decem-



District Forest Officer C. Chaitanya Kumar Reddy and his team conducting the elephant census in the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in Chittoor district on Thursday.

ber 1990 with elephants in single digits, the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary is now one of the 33 elephant

reserves notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change. The present num-

ber grew close to 100 resident elephants and an equal number of migrants. District Forest Officer (Chittoor) C. Chaitanya Kumar Reddy, who initiated the census in Palamaner range, said: "The very first day of the census has started on a positive note."

Meanwhile, the jumbo census commenced in the core belt of Seshachalam hills spread over Railway Kodur, Rajampeta, Sanipaya, and Balapalle forest ranges in the Annamayya district.

## Lantern festival on Morjim beach switched off

**Panaji:** Even as govt departments geared up to halt the lantern festival scheduled at Morjim's turtle nesting site on Saturday, the organisers announced cancellation of the event on their website.

Activists had raised a storm on social media, alleging that holding the event may be a fire hazard for marine life and the community. At the turtle hatchery, the bright lights would also disturb the remaining hatchlings, which are likely to complete incubation shortly.

"Glowfest cancelled" was the short message the organisers put on their page. **TNN**

### ► Organisers, P 4

# Organisers hadn't sought permission for event: Govt

### ► From P 1

This followed protests by activists on social media, their petitions to authorities to initiate action against the likely danger to marine life, which, they said, is already suffering from various activities. To their credit, the forest department swung into action.

Prem Kumar R, deputy conservator of forests, wildlife and eco tourism (North) wrote to the environment secretary seeking suitable intervention "to maintain the sanctity of the turtle hatchery and nesting site at Morjim beach".

"The entire stretch of Morjim beach is a nesting site of Olive Ridley turtles," he said. Holding the event at Morjim will be a violation of rules and regulation of Goa's coastal zone management authority (GCZMA), he added.

In another letter to GCZMA, Atmaram Gauns, RFO, marine range, Morjim, said the event organiser had not submitted any documents/permission for the festival. Gauns also requested Morjim PI to deploy police personnel to halt the festival.



Despite cancellation, activists said the booking link is open

Prior to this, Pernem deputy collector had on Wednesday directed Mandrem PI to deploy necessary police force and maintain strict vigil to ensure that the festival is not held.

The tourism department has also confirmed that organisers had not sought any permission for the event. "Necessary action has been initiated in this regard. We have been focusing on promoting regenerative tourism and we shall not allow any event which threatens the ecology or the environment," Suneel Anchipaka director tourism said.

However, despite the cancellation activists expressed surprise that the booking link is still not closed. "We are keeping our eyes wide open," an activist said.

# Monsoon brings surge in baby snake presence

Bengaluru residents are urged to take precautions against rising young snake encounters

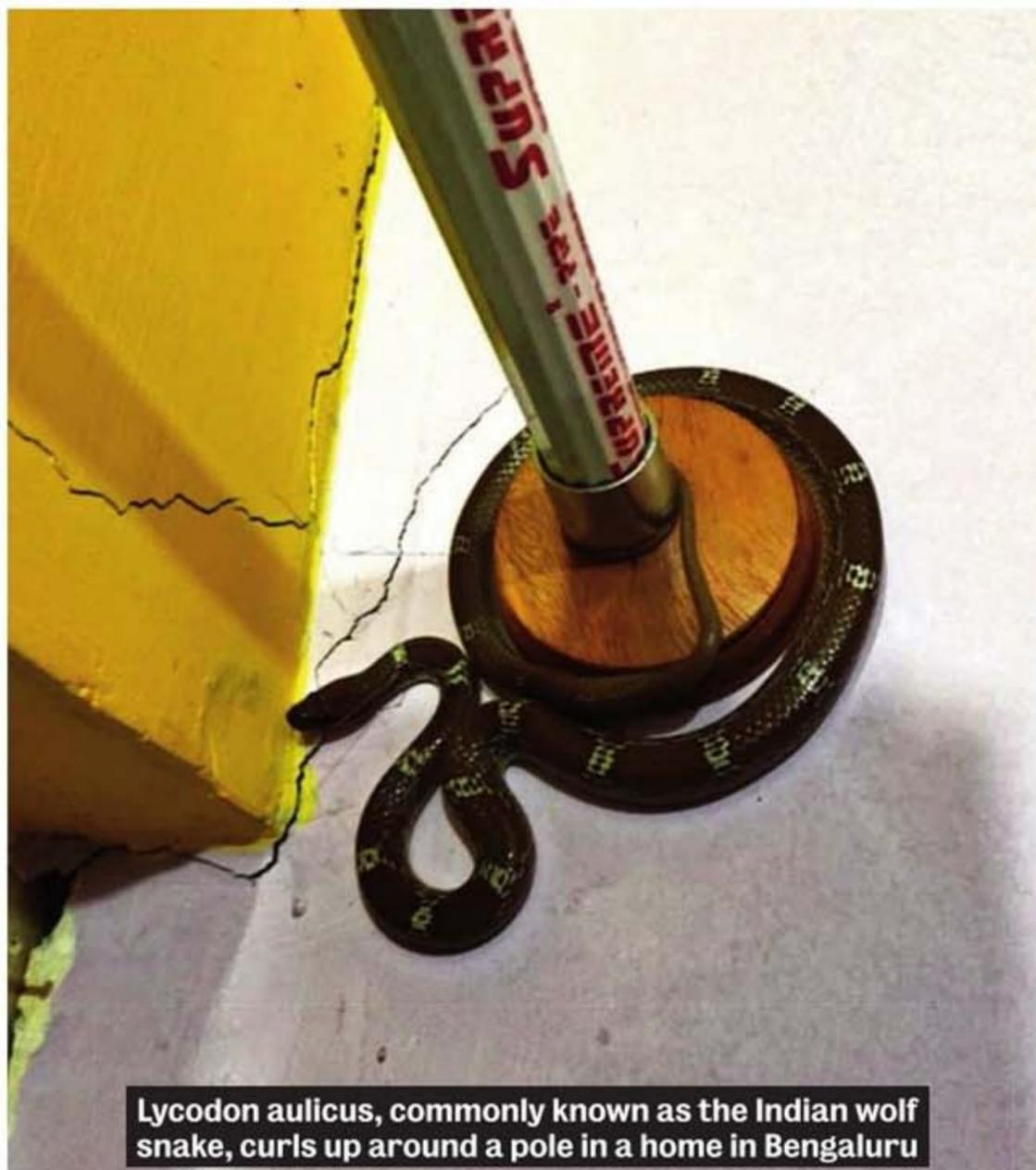
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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

As the monsoon rains bring flooding to various parts of Bengaluru, areas like Kalyan Nagar, Marathahalli, Nagarbhavi, and Banashankari are witnessing an increase in the presence of baby snakes. Among the most commonly encountered species are cobras, Russell's vipers and sometimes even the common kraits, and saw-scaled vipers. The rescuers pointed out that this could be the hatching season and generally from May end to even until October, there is always an increase in the number of baby snakes found.

With the monsoon creating ideal hatching conditions and leading to baby snakes venturing into residential areas, the public needs to be aware of the risks and take necessary precautions. "Baby snakes, lacking the experience of their adult counterparts, can become defensive and strike if they feel threatened. On a single day, the rescuers are getting 5-6 rescue calls per day and the numbers are expected to rise," said Mohan from BBMP wildlife warden.

Mohan highlighted a major issue: snakes frequently enter homes and shoes left outdoors while hunting for food. This problem worsens



**Lycodon aulicus, commonly known as the Indian wolf snake, curls up around a pole in a home in Bengaluru**

in areas with inadequate garbage disposal, as the trash attracts rats, subsequently drawing in snakes. Vacant lots strewn with waste further compound the problem by becoming breeding sites for these reptiles. Mohan recalled receiving a call from a city school on Wednesday, though the situation was swiftly resolved without causing panic, as the snake was promptly located.

**Baby snakes, lacking experience of adult counterparts, can become defensive and strike if they feel threatened**

– Mohan, wildlife warden

According to the rescuers the female cobras, for instance, lay around 15-20 eggs. As the eggs hatch, the baby snakes begin their independent lives, often seeking shelter and food. The flooding and heavy rains force these young snakes out of their natural habitats and into human-populated areas. Their small size allows them to slip through small crevices and gaps, leading them into homes, gardens, and even shoes left outside. The rescuers pointed out that if one comes across a snake, it's advisable to calmly move back and create distance. Then, promptly report the sighting to either the BBMP control room or the forest department. Snake rescuers strongly discourage individuals from attempting rescues independently, especially considering the growing trend of people trying to do so after watching online videos.

## Few of the preventive measures

- 1. Keep Shoes Indoors:** Snakes often hide in shoes left outside. So you can store your footwear inside or thoroughly check them before use.
- 2. Secure Garbage Disposal:** Properly dispose of garbage to avoid attracting rats, which are a food source for snakes.
- 3. Maintain Clean Surroundings:** Regularly clean and maintain yards, gardens, and surroundings to deter snakes from settling.
- 4. Seal Entry Points:** Inspect and seal gaps, holes, and crevices in walls, doors, and windows to prevent snakes from entering homes.
- 5. Call Professionals:** Never attempt to handle or capture snakes. Contact professional snake rescuers for safe and humane removal.



**Bangalore Mirror had reported on May 19 on how rain, climate change driving snakes out of their habitat and into residential areas**

# Multi-vaccine will be given to stray dogs in June, says GCC

The vaccine, usually administered on pet dogs, will build immunity against the contagious canine distemper virus, canine adeno virus, canine parvo virus, and two kinds of leptospirosis

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

**T**he Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) plans to administer on stray dogs a multi-vaccine that will enhance immunity against six diseases, including the contagious canine distemper virus (CDV). The process is expected to begin in mid-June after the election ends.

“A total of 20,000 vials, each expected to cost roughly ₹200 or more in the retail market, are to be procured through the Tamil Nadu Medical Service Corporation (TNMSC). But, in case of unavailability, the GCC will have to consider floating a tender to procure the vaccines from private agencies,” said an official in the GCC’s Public Health Department.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), the administrative body responsible for civic amenities and some infrastructural assets of the Greater Bengaluru metropolitan area, was the first civic body in the country to administer this vaccine to stray



Stray canines sheltered at the Meenambakkam Animal Birth Control (ABC) centre of the Greater Chennai Corporation. R. AISHWARYAA

dogs in October 2023. It is usually administered only on pets. The GCC is poised to be the second in the country and the first in Tamil Nadu to do the same, the official added.

Commercially known as Megavac-6 (six-in-one vaccine), the shot covers major infections - CDV, canine contagious hepatitis virus, canine adeno virus, canine parvo virus, and two types of leptospirosis, leptospira canicola and leptospira icterohaemorrhagica - according to the official. The

dogs that are brought to the animal birth control centres in Kannamapettai, Pulianthope, Meenambakkam, and Sholinganallur will be vaccinated following the surgical process, he said.

The GCC’s Veterinary Public Health wing halted the stray dog census due to polling work. The civic body has anticipated that the total number of stray dogs will come to around 93,000 this year. In the 2018 survey, it was 57,366, and in 2020, it was found

to be over 68,000, during a year-long mass vaccination programme.

## New ABC centres

The GCC will open three new animal birth control (ABC) centres under the Chennai-Care for Animals Project (C-CAP) in Pulianthope, Kannamapettai, and Lloyd’s Road for mass sterilisation and immunisation in July. The project, estimated to cost ₹20 crore and taken up under Singara Chennai 2.0, will have 460 stainless steel kennels to house stray dogs – 140 each in Pulianthope and Kannamapettai and 180 in the Lloyd’s Road, said GCC Veterinary Officer J. Kamal Hussain.

“The building in Lloyd’s Road centre is being refurbished. New centres have been constructed in the land close to the existing centres in Kannamapettai and Pulianthope. The use for these structures will be decided after the results of the Lok Sabha election are announced,” he said. The ground floor of the building will be used for treating the dogs, while the first floor will be a shelter.

## **No dance at turtle nesting site**

**T**he Goa forest, as well as tourism departments have opposed a music-and-dance festival slated to be held near a turtle nesting site at Morjim Beach in North Goa district on May 25. The Lantern Festival, also known as



Glow Fest, is scheduled to be held on Saturday at Morjim beach which has been notified as a turtle nesting site. The festival organised by private entities, where people can participate in a lantern lighting ceremony, features live music, dance performances and other activities. The entire stretch of the Morjim beach is a nesting site of Olive Ridley turtles

# Second synchronised elephant population estimation gets under way in Tamil Nadu

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

The second synchronised elephant population estimation began on Thursday in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.

In Tamil Nadu, it is being conducted in 26 forest divisions and 697 blocks. Teams of forest guards, forest watchers, and volunteers walked in the selected blocks from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and recorded the presence of elephants and their details.

Across the State, 1,836 Forest Department staff members and 342 volunteers will participate in the exercise.

Formal training for the estimation was given from May 12 to May 22 with biologists working at the Mudumalai, Sathyamanga-



**Significant survey:** The exercise, in which 1,836 Forest Dept. staff members and 342 volunteers will participate, is being conducted in 26 forest divisions and 697 blocks across T.N. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lam, Anamalai, Srivilliputhur-Megamalai, and Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserves, the Forest Department said.

On Friday, Forest Department staff members and volunteers will walk along the transect line set up over two kilometres and survey elephant dung visible on both sides and record observations.

The waterhole survey

will be undertaken on Saturday, the final day of the exercise, wherever there is a waterhole. The teams will record elephants coming for drinking water and note down the herd structure and sex of the animals.

In the Anamalai Tiger Reserve, 199 forest staff members and 30 volunteers are engaged in the estimation in 87 blocks in

eight forest ranges under the Pollachi and Tiruppur Forest Divisions. Field Director S. Ramasubramanian was coordinating the exercise being conducted under the supervision of Deputy Field Directors Bhargava Teja and Devendra Kumar Meena.

District Forest Officer N. Jayaraj said 84 staff members and 40 trainees from the Central Academy for State Forest Service and volunteers from WWF-India are engaged in the estimation in 42 blocks under seven forest ranges in the Coimbatore Forest Division.

In the Nilgiris, the exercise began in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, the Mukurthi National Park, Masinagudi, and the Gudalur and Nilgiris Forest Divisions. D. Venkatesh, Conservator of Forests

(Nilgiris), said the exercise would be conducted across 105 blocks by 338 volunteers and staff members.

After the estimation is done, the District Forest Officers will send the data forms, filled with collected details, to the Tiger Monitoring Cell, Theppakadu, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. The data will be systematically analysed and the number of elephants in the 26 forest divisions will be estimated for all elephant and tiger reserves.

According to the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, for the first time, a synthesis report of the southern States will be prepared to give better insights into the population patterns in the neighbouring States.

Last year, 2,961 elephants were recorded in Tamil Nadu.

# Security guard trampled to death by elephant on Tamil Nadu's Bharathiar University campus



## **AGENCIES**

CHENNAI, 23 MAY

In a shocking incident, a security guard was trampled to death by a wild elephant inside the Bharathiar University campus in Tamil

Nadu's Coimbatore.

The deceased was identified as Shanmughan.

Police said a group of wild elephants entered the Bharathiar University campus on Thursday morning. Forest personnel on being informed

reached the spot and drove the wild elephants out of the campus.

Due to the synchronized elephant survey that started on Thursday, the forest staff left the spot soon. After some time two wild elephants again entered the campus and the security personnel tried to drive them out. However, one of the elephants turned around and attacked the security guard who died on the spot. Bharathiar University shares borders with a dense forest area and wild elephants often reach the outskirts of the campus. Forest department officials reached the spot and the body of Shanmughan was transferred to the Coimbatore Government Medical College hospital for post-mortem and further proceedings.

# TN to move environment ministry against Kerala's Mullaperiyar dam proposal

**Julie.Mariappan**  
@timesgroup.com

**Chennai:** Opposing Kerala's renewed plan to build a new Mullaperiyar dam, Tamil Nadu govt is set to move Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change on Friday to urge it not to take up the proposal of Kerala govt in the expert appraisal committee's meeting scheduled for May 28, sources said. Kerala had sought the terms of reference for an environmental impact assessment (EIA) study for building a new Mullaperiyar dam.

Tamil Nadu govt officials came to know on Wednesday evening the proposal being listed by the ministry's expert appraisal committee (river valley and hydroelectric projects) in its upcoming meeting. "The state govt will reach out to the ministry since Kerala's move is against the order of Supreme Court.

On the construction of the new dam, the court in its order in 2014 categorically stated that both states had to agree," a senior official told **TOI**.

► **TN rejects proposal, P 5**

# TN rejects Kerala's EIA study proposal, cites SC clarification

► **From P1**

The official said, "Besides, the offer made by Kerala cannot be thrust on Tamil Nadu." Water resources department officials rejected Kerala govt's written statement to the ministry that SC had granted permission for conducting the environmental impact assessment study.

In its clarification note on inter-state issues submitted to the ministry, Kerala govt pointed to the dismissal of a petition filed by Tamil Nadu govt seeking to restrain Kerala from taking up EIA study pursuant to the clearance given by the standing committee of National Board for Wildlife in 2014. The interlocutory application was heard by the court in 2016 and it was dismissed as infructuous. "Since the issue has been accepted by the apex body, it is of the view that mutual consent/amicable solution passed in this regard shall not be insisted upon while applying for environmental clearance," Kerala govt said.

When a similar attempt was made in 2015, Tamil Nadu govt took up with the ministry and saw the proposal delisted. TN govt filed a contempt petition in 2019 against expert appraisal committee member-secretary, Kerala chief secretary and chief engineer of Irrigation, Design and Research Board when the committee acceded to Kerala's proposal and recommended terms of reference to collect baseline data to conduct the study. The petition was disposed of a month later upon Kerala's submission that modalities mentioned in the SC order would be followed and the state did not propose to start any construction of a new dam, TN govt sources said.

# Tortoises' seizure: Koramangala bungalow owner booked

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has opened a case against Rubi Om Prakash, the owner of a palatial bungalow in Koramangala, where three Indian star tortoises were found on Wednesday. Balaji, a supervisor working at the house, has already been arrested.

The raid on the bungalow in Koramangala 3rd Block, Bengaluru's famed Billionaire Street, was one of the three raids conducted by officials from the CID's forest cell on Wednesday.

The CID has booked Rubi and Balaji under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, with the former being listed as accused number one. However, she has not been arrested yet.

"Rubi bought those animals after an astrologer suggested they bring good health and wealth. The astrologer is no more," a CID officer said. CID sleuths denied that Balaji was a close aide of the co-founder of a major e-tailer headquartered in Bengaluru.

# Unique dental procedure for Bandipur tusker

Elephant's crisscross tusks shortened to prevent farm raids and aid feeding in wild

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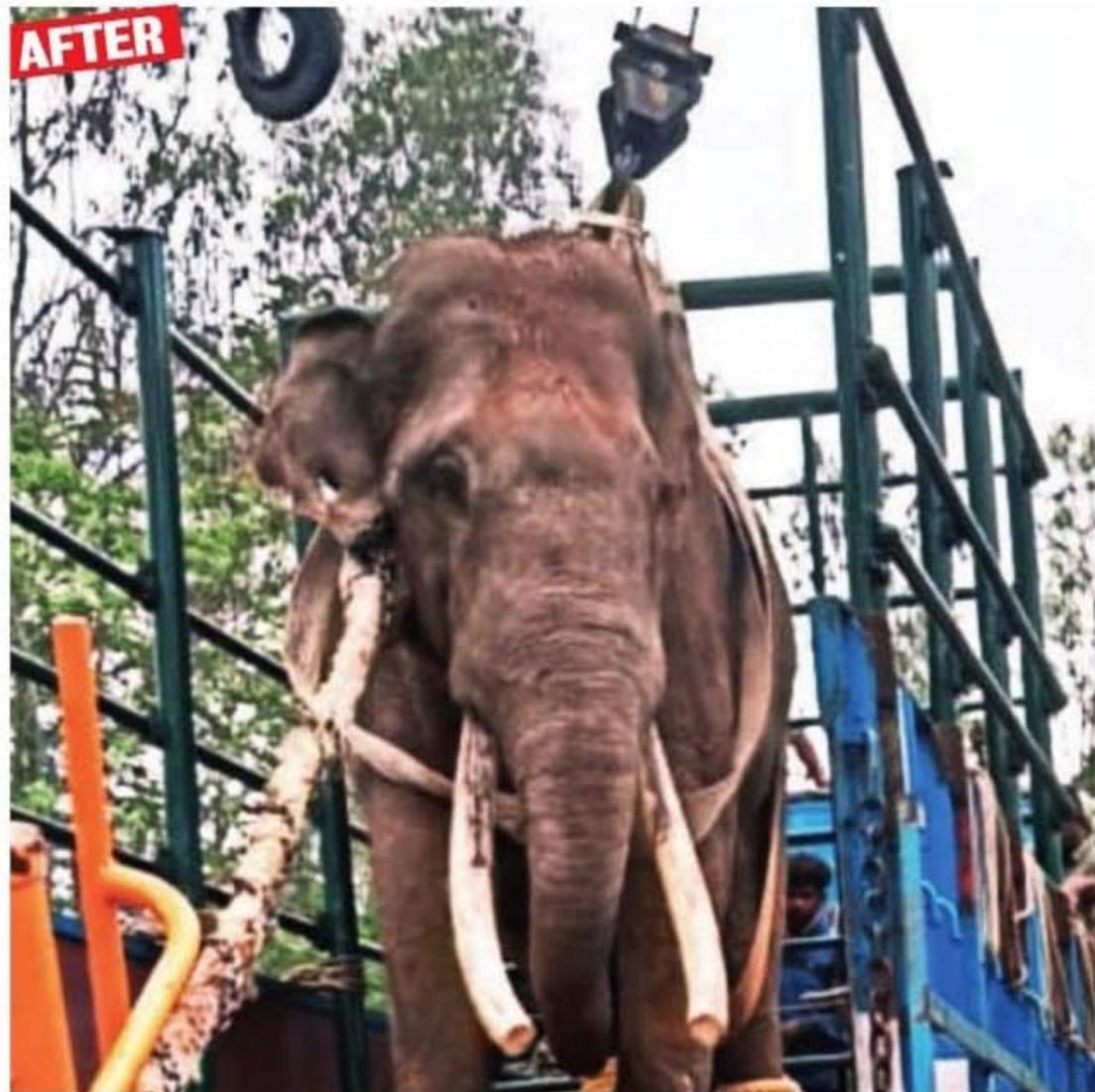
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

**A** four-year-old tusker in Bandipur Tiger Reserve recently got a new lease on life after veterinarians from the Karnataka Forest Department (KFD) carried out a unique dental procedure, akin to tooth aligning in humans.

According to KFD officials at Bandipur, the young elephant had been continuously raiding farmlands in the GS Betta range of Bandipur Tiger Reserve for over the last six months. Upon requests from local farmers, the Bandipur administration received an order from the Chief Wildlife Warden, KFD, to capture the elephant.

However, Bandipur officials decided to observe the jumbo to understand the reason behind its frequent raids on banana and corn fields. They found this case intriguing as the elephant did not miss a single day and consistently raided the farmlands.

"We had received information about an elephant that had been continuously raiding farmlands and crops in the JS Betta range of Gundlupete Taluk of Bandipur Tiger Reserve. We observed the animal as it continued to descend into farmlands and raided crops, particularly bananas and corn. Upon observation, we realized its tusks were in a criss-cross pattern. The animal was not able to lift its head or trunk and graze. The jumbo was raiding farmlands because it was unable to feed in the wild and was thus hungry," said S Prabhakaran, Deputy



Conservator of Forest and Director of Bandipur Tiger Reserve.

Since the animal was healthy and young, officials decided to shorten

the tusks to facilitate feeding and release him back into the forest afterwards. The elephant underwent the procedure nearly ten days ago. KFD

**“Our vets concluded that the tusks had to be shortened. The procedure was carried out while shifting the elephant. Elephants need to be tranquillised for capture and shifting**

—S Prabhakaran,

Deputy Conservator of Forest and Director of Bandipur Tiger Reserve

officials noted that while this procedure is conducted on camp elephants regularly, not many wild elephants have gone through it.

"Our vets concluded that the tusks had to be shortened. The procedure was carried out while shifting the elephant. Elephants need to be tranquillised for capture and shifting. We carried out the procedure while the animal was sedated. It was a nearly 20-minute-long procedure," informed Prabhakaran.

The elephant has now been released into the wild and is being monitored by the department around the clock.

"The elephant has settled in a new place, and we are observing him continuously. It is easy to identify him since the tusk has been cut. We will keep an eye on him for some more time. The tusk is short and looks unusual now, but it will soon grow and become blunt as the animal continues to forage," added Prabhakaran.

## WILDLIFE CENSUS AT JHALANA LEOPARD SAFARI

Pics: Bhagirath



Forest department staff and wildlife enthusiasts took up positions at Jhalana Leopard Safari Park on Thursday to count animals and birds at waterholes in the forest for the annual wildlife census