

F. No. 2-7/1998-PE (Vol-I)
Government of India/ भारत सरकार
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change/पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु
परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
(Project Tiger & Elephant Division / व्याघ्र एवं हथी परियोजना प्रभाग)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110003
Dated: As per E-sign

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Proceedings of the 21st Project Elephant Steering Committee Meeting held on 26th June 2025 at IGNFA, Dehradun -reg.

The undersigned is enclosing herewith the approved proceedings of the 21st Project Elephant Steering Committee meeting held on 26th June 2025 at Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister, EFCC.

2. This issue with the approval of Hon'ble Minister, EFCC and Chairman, Steering Committee of Project Elephant.

Encls: as above.

(Suneet Bhardwaj)
Asst. Inspector General of Forest (PT&E)

Distribution:

- All members of the Steering Committee of Project Elephant.

Copy to:

PS to Hon'ble Minister, EFCC.
PS to Hon'ble Minister of State, EFCC. PPS to Secretary, MoEF&CC.
PPS to DGF&SS, MoEF&CC.
PPS to ADGF (PT&E) and MS, NTCA, MoEF&CC.
PPS to ADGF (Wildlife), MoEF&CC. PPS to AS&FA, MoEF&CC.
PS to IGF (PT&E) & Director (Project Elephant), MoEF&CC.

Proceedings of the 21st Project Elephant Steering Committee Meeting
26th June 2025

IGNFA, Dehradun

The 21st meeting of the Steering Committee of the Project Elephant was held on 26th June 2025 at Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister, Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, Government of India, **Shri. Bhupender Yadav**.

The list of participants is at **Annexure-1**.

21st Project Elephant Steering Committee: The Chairman welcomed all the participants of the meeting. Shri Ramesh Pandey, ADGF, made a brief presentation updating the committee about the progress made so far and discussed the following agenda items:

Agenda-1: Action taken on the decisions made during the 20th Steering Committee and its Confirmation.

Decision	Action Taken
i. Regional workshops would be conducted in the southern region and northeast region. The dates would be finalized based on the discussions with the CWLWs.	A regional workshop for the southern region was held on 5th September 2024 in Coimbatore, followed by a workshop on elephant welfare. Southern states have shared required data and designated nodal officers. A meeting was held on 18th December 2024 to discuss the Regional Action Plan, and a sub-committee was constituted on 19th February 2025. For the northeastern region, a workshop was conducted on 21–22 January 2025 in Guwahati, followed by a handler training program. The sub-committee formation is underway.
ii. A survey of sensitive railway stretches would be completed, and a comprehensive, consolidated report would be finalized.	The survey report for 10 states was completed and released on Elephant Day 2024. Survey in four more states is completed, and the consolidated report has been released in 21 st Steering Committee meeting.
iii. The CWLWs would coordinate with PE/WII and expedite collection of genetic samples of the captive elephants	Letters were sent to all states and UTs for expediting genetic sample collection. Since August 2024, about 1,000 samples have been collected. As of now, 1,911 genetic

for completing the genetic database at the earliest.	profiles have been catalogued, covering 70% of India's captive elephant population from 22 states.
iv. Synchronized elephant population estimation process to be expedited in the northeast region and the final report of the all-India population estimation to be submitted by WII to the Ministry by June 2025.	Phase-I sampling in northeastern states has been completed. Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has been asked to expedite submission of the final All-India Elephant Estimation Report. A review meeting was held on 2 nd June, and presentation by WII on the same has been scheduled.
v. Project Elephant may issue an advisory to the States regarding issuing fitness certificate for elephants during transfer/transportation. The advisory is intended to specify the time frame within which the elephants earmarked for transportation should be medically examined for issuing fitness certificate. Further the genetic profile of the transporting elephants should also be ensured by the CWLWs.	An advisory was issued on 20 th August 2024 to all CWLWs reiterating the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 that no elephant transfer can occur without entry of its genetic profile in the Gaj Soochna application.
vi. Karnataka Forest Department may submit a report to the Ministry on the best practices and key lessons learned during the International Elephant Conference conducted on 12th August 2024 in Bengaluru.	A summary report, along with the books released during the International Elephant Conference held on 12 th August 2024 in Bengaluru, was received from Karnataka on 15 th January 2025.
vii. Uttarakhand Forest Department may share with the Ministry the pictorial manual on elephant mahout training available with the State.	The mahout training manual from Uttarakhand was not available. A similar manual from Kerala has been obtained/procured.
viii. A Model ECP may be prepared by the support of Project Elephant and Elephant Cell, WII.	A project for preparing a Model Elephant Conservation Plan (ECP) for the Nilgiri Elephant Reserve was sanctioned on 23 rd October 2024 with an outlay of ₹9.51 lakhs. As part of the project, two field experts have been engaged to carry out the development of Model ECP. Meeting has been conducted with Tamil Nadu forest officials and field visits are being scheduled for the collection of data for development of Model ECP.

Agenda-2: Issues flagged by the Steering Committee members and permanent invitees

Shri Ngilyang Tam, CWLW, Arunachal Pradesh highlighted the increasing trend of Human-elephant conflicts in the elephant habitat areas of Arunachal Pradesh. He requested that a comprehensive action plan with best strategies adopted successfully in other parts of the country should be replicated in these areas for better management of Human-elephant conflicts with funding support from MoEF&CC.

Shri Shubharanjan Sen, CWLW, Madhya Pradesh informed that the delineation of elephant corridors in Madhya Pradesh has been completed, and these corridors are now proposed to be notified and incorporated into the official Elephant Corridors of India publication by Project Elephant. He highlighted that elephants are relatively new to the landscape in Madhya Pradesh, and therefore, the State seeks guidance on best practices for elephant management. He also suggested that the use of advanced technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), may be explored to address Human-Elephant Conflict more effectively.

Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar highlighted that coordination between states is essential to ensure safe corridors and conflict mitigation.

Shri Subhash Malkede, CWLW Karnataka informed that different Protected Areas (PAs), Elephant and Tiger Reserves have separate management plans. Further the prescription of working plan is also there. He recommended the need for a combined, landscape-level management plan. He additionally recommended that the PT&E scheme be separated, and that the funding for PE be increased, as the current allocation is inadequate to address the conservation requirements.

Shri Promod G Krishnan, CWLW, Kerala pointed out that IDWH funds are PA-specific under Project Tiger, while PE funds are disbursed at the state level, leading to dilution of impact. He recommended that PE funding be directed to Elephant Reserves for more effective outcomes.

Shri Rakesh Kumar Dogra, CWLW, Tamil Nadu proposed that Tiger Conservation Foundations (TCFs), which operate under Tiger Reserves, be replicated for Elephant Reserves to support local conservation financing and mainstreaming of funds.

Shri Sandeep Sundriyal, CWLW, West Bengal expressed interest in adopting immune contraceptive-based population management programs, as being implemented in Karnataka.

Shri P.C. Tyagi highlighted that invasive species are increasingly threatening elephant habitats. He also stressed the need for defining criteria for captive elephant monitoring to address current data gaps.

Shri Prem Kumar Jha, CWLW, Odisha noted that HEC in the state is seasonal, especially during October to January, and proposed a dedicated study to better understand and manage the pattern.

Shri B S Bonal stated that DNA profiling of captive elephants is progressing well.

He emphasized that studbook management should be institutionalized within PAs, and compiled records of progeny (as maintained in Kaziranga National Park) should be replicated elsewhere.

Harish Chaudhary, CWLW, Meghalaya observed that Project Elephant funding is inadequate (~₹10,000 per elephant annually). He suggested leveraging alternate funding streams.

Shri Anil Kumar, representative of WWF-India said that habitat fragmentation and infrastructure expansion are major causes of HEC. He recommended accelerated construction of underpasses and overpasses for wildlife crossings, particularly in Terai landscapes, where road widening is underway.

Shri Sandeep Tiwari, member mentioned that in recent years elephant range has been extended and new areas are being occupied/visited by the elephants. Therefore, he stressed the importance of sensitizing communities in these newly occupied areas to facilitate early conflict prevention and promote coexistence.

ADGF informed that the process of formulation of Regional Action Plan is underway which will facilitate landscape level management.

Agenda 3: Status Update on the “Model Elephant Conservation Plan”

ADGF updated that a project titled “*Planning Conservation in Elephant Reserves – Developing Elephant Conservation Model Plan*” for the Nilgiri Elephant Reserve was sanctioned on 23rd October 2024 with an outlay of ₹9.51 lakhs. Two wildlife planning experts have been engaged, meetings have been held with Tamil Nadu officials, and field visits for data collection will begin shortly. The plan is expected to be finalized by December 2025.

Agenda 4: Progress on All India Synchronized Elephant Estimation

Phase-I sampling has been completed in all northeastern states and a total of 16500 dung samples collected has been processed. Review meetings were held on 6th November 2024, 7th March 2025, and 2nd June 2025. The report is at the final stage of completion and presentation by WII is being scheduled.

Agenda 5. An update on joint site-inspection of the sensitive stretches of railways and data/ information which has been received from the State Governments for updating in the portal developed by WII for monitoring the implementation of mitigation measures.

ADGF informed that MoEF&CC, in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Ministry of Railways, identified 110 sensitive railway sections intersecting elephant habitats and 17 additional sections within tiger range states. A comprehensive survey was undertaken across 127 railway stretches, covering a total length of 3,452.4 km. Based on the intensity of wildlife usage, mitigation measures have been recommended for 77 stretches spanning 1,965.2 km across 14 states.

He further added that the survey has been completed in all concerned states, and the final consolidated report is now ready for official release.

Shri Subhash Malkede, CWLW, Karnataka, highlighted that in cases where expansion or creation of railway lines is done by railway authority not involving the approval of central government or state forest department under FCA generally the mitigation measures is not proposed and carried by the Railways which lead to collision incidents. He suggested that irrespective of the forest/non-forest land, the provision for mitigation measures should be a part of Railways planning process.

Shri Anil Kumar noted that most train-elephant collisions occur due to fog, blind curves, and steep cuts in the railway alignment. He underscored the need for addressing these specific issues through targeted interventions to prevent further wildlife casualties.

Dr. Vinay Gupta, CWLW, Assam, informed that work on the Deepor Beel railway line realignment has not yet commenced. However, intrusion detection systems are being implemented in the state to prevent elephant-train collisions. He further shared that six districts in Assam have initiated a pilot Gaj Mitra scheme, which emphasizes community-led interventions including solar fencing, elephant movement tracking, and habitat improvement, all undertaken with active participation from local communities.

Shri Sandeep Sundriyal, CWLW, West Bengal informed that state in collaboration with the Railways regularly conducts sensitization workshops for locomotive drivers. The sensitization of locomotive drivers has been helpful in reducing the number of train hits in the state.

Agenda 6(a) State wise enforcement measures adopted/being implemented to minimize the cases of elephant deaths due to train hits and electrocution.

ADGF highlighted that approximately 100 elephants die annually due to unnatural causes, with electrocution accounting for nearly 60% of these fatalities.

Shri Prem Kumar, CWLW, Chhattisgarh informed that the State, in coordination with the electricity department, is identifying and rectifying all loose and hazardous electrical points within elephant habitats.

The Director General of Forests & Special Secretary emphasized that all sagging power lines within forested areas must be proactively identified by patrolling teams. He recommended that necessary measures be taken promptly to mitigate and prevent potential hazards to wildlife, particularly elephants, arising from such electrical infrastructure.

Ms. Ruchika Rishi, Additional Director, WCCB emphasized the need for sensitization on the legal provisions of Wildlife Protection Act. It was suggested that local communities be made aware of the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, especially the fact that disturbing or harming wild animals constitutes a punishable offence.

Shri Prem Kumar Jha, CWLW, Odisha pointed out that high costs associated with solar fencing often discourage farmers from adopting it. As a result, people resort to illegal electrification of fences meant to deter wild pigs, which inadvertently leads to elephant electrocutions.

Shri Rakesh Kumar Dogra, CWLW, Tamil Nadu shared that the State has adopted a two-fold strategy to address illegal electric fencing:

1. Implementation of a *Tamil Nadu Power Fences (Registration And Regulation) Rules, 2023* for electric fencing, by forest and electricity department and
2. Promotion of aerial bunched cables, which are less prone to causing wildlife electrocution.

Shri Ajaya Kumar Naik, CWLW, Andhra Pradesh, informed that transformers in fringe villages are being regularly monitored, and their height has been increased with the support of the district administration to prevent electrocution risks. In the northern regions of the state, in coordination with the electricity department, the power/ capacity in areas with elephant presence is temporarily reduced until the elephants move out, as a preventive measure against electrocution.

Agenda 6 (b) State wise progress of DNA profiling of Captive Elephant and progress report with respect to captive elephants in India.

ADGF informed that DNA sampling of captive elephants has been completed in 10 states. The work in some states is under progress, however, the states of Odisha, Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Puducherry, Nagaland, and Maharashtra were requested to expedite the collection and submission of genetic samples to support the completion of the national genetic database.

Agenda 7. An update on Regional Action Plan for Comprehensive Understanding and Management of Human Elephant Conflict in East Central, Southern and North-eastern India and regional workshops for elephant custodians/handlers.

In Southern India, a regional coordination meeting and a one-day workshop on elephant welfare were held on 5th September 2024 in Coimbatore. Data for the Regional Action Plan has been collected, nodal officers have been appointed by the respective states, and a drafting sub-committee was constituted on 19th February 2025. A field visit was organized in the month of May in Wayanad, Kerala. More field visits in other states will be conducted in the month of July. In the Northeastern region, a coordination meeting and a two-day workshop were conducted on 21–22 January 2025 in Guwahati, and the formation of a drafting sub-committee is currently underway.

Agenda 8. Proposed conference/workshop for victims of affected people from Human Elephant Conflict in India.

Hon'ble Minister EFCC suggested that a workshop be conducted in West Bengal.

Shri Sandeep Sundriyal, CWLW, West Bengal agreed that state will make arrangements for the workshop.

Agenda 9. Proposed study on overlapping areas of Tiger Reserve and Elephant Reserve and evolving management mechanisms and conservation strategies.

Hon'ble Minister EFCC suggested that a committee be formed in this regard.

Agenda 10. Discussion with regard to the World Elephant Day celebration 2025 (12th August 2025)

Hon'ble Minister EFCC agreed to conduct the World Elephant Day 2025 celebrations in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Further, the Additional Director General (Wildlife/Project Elephant) informed that nominations for the Gaj Gaurav Award 2025 have not yet been received from the States. He emphasized the need for States to urgently submit nominations to facilitate the recognition and felicitation of ground-level workers and mahouts who have made significant contributions to elephant conservation.

Shri Rakesh Kumar Dogra, CWLW, Tamil Nadu agreed that state will make arrangements for the program.

Agenda 11. Discussion on creating mass awareness on elephant conservation and preventive measures for human-elephant conflicts.

ADGF has informed that the Centre of Excellence on Human-Wildlife Conflict is established at WII's SACON campus in Coimbatore. A proposal seeking ₹99.54 crore from CAMPA over 5 years has been submitted which includes capacity building and awareness.

Agenda 12. Any other items with the permission of the Chair.

Shri Promod G Krishnan, CWLW, Kerala highlighted that aspects related to habitat corridors and Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) are currently not adequately addressed under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. He suggested that these critical components of elephant conservation and management may be considered for incorporation in future amendments to the Act.

Shri Subhash Malkede, CWLW Karnataka informed that habitat improvement activities are being actively undertaken in the state, which, although capital intensive (₹1 lakh per hectare), have led to increased prey density and a notable reduction in elephant movement outside forest areas. He requested that a soft release centre for elephants be sanctioned in Bhadra Tiger Reserve by the central government under section 12. Further, he emphasized that managing Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) is a complex and scientific process and accordingly suggested that Sections 11 and 12 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 may be reviewed.

Ms. Ruchika Rishi, Additional Director, WCCB emphasized the importance of investigation and evidence collection training for Forest Department personnel, preferably conducted jointly with the Police Department, particularly in the context of elephant-related cases. It was noted that in instances of organized wildlife crime, coordination with multiple enforcement agencies is essential. Concern was raised regarding the lack of standardized procedures in elephant post-mortems, which are critical for building strong legal cases. It was also suggested that a DNA database of dead elephants be developed to aid in tracing the origin of ivory and supporting enforcement actions.

Dr K.K. Sarma highlighted that the Forest Departments face a shortage of veterinary professionals, and as a result, post-mortems are currently being conducted by the Animal Husbandry Department, which often leads to non-standardized procedures. He recommended that dedicated veterinary personnel be appointed within the Wildlife Wing to ensure proper and scientific post-mortem practices.

Hon'ble Minister EFCC emphasized the need for a comprehensive welfare and capacity-building program for mahouts and field staff. He suggested that PE funds should prioritize empowering field level staff and mahouts, and states should facilitate their access to PM Awas Yojana and Ayushman Bharat health coverage. Communities should be involved in managing human-elephant conflicts and be an active partners in wildlife conservation. He recommended identifying train hit hotspots and conducting awareness programs during Wildlife Week in collaboration with the Loco Drivers and officials of the Railways, the National Highway Authority, the Power department, and the Mining department.

Release of the publications:

During the event, the following documents were released:

- i. Report on suggested measures to mitigate Asian Elephant- Train Collision on vulnerable railway consolidated report for 14 States with suggested mitigation measures for elephant deaths due to train collisions.
- ii. State-wise report on understanding elephant conflict issues for suggesting conflict reduction measures for the States of Assam, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.
- iii. Advisory on Tusk Trimming
- iv. TRUMPET Quarterly Journal – January 2025

Decisions Taken:

1. A Committee to analyse train-hit accidents of last 10 years and identify hot-spots shall be constituted, comprising Shri Anil Kumar, Dr. Bilal Habib, and representatives from the states of West Bengal, Assam, and Odisha.
2. A Committee shall be constituted to study overlapping areas of Tiger and Elephant Reserves and for giving recommendations on evolving management mechanisms and conservation strategies for such areas.
3. During Wildlife Week, awareness programmes focusing on Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) shall be organized in Kolkata in collaboration with Railways, the National Highway Authority, the Power department and Mining Departments etc. The programmes shall specifically target the Human-elephant conflict zones around railway lines, national highways, mining zones etc. The programmes be conducted region-wise by various Forest Training Institutes, SACON, IIFM Bhopal and WII Dehradun.
4. The states shall ensure the welfare and capacity building of the field staff and mahouts. They will also ensure that the ground staff is informed and aware about various welfare programs, such as Ayushman Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, government insurance schemes, etc.
5. Advisory to Elephant range states and Ministry of Railways to carry out regular awareness programs for locomotive drivers shall be issued.
6. The Proposed conference/workshop for victims of affected people from Human Elephant Conflict in India shall be jointly conducted preferably in the state of West Bengal.

7. Recalling the gruesome elephant poaching incidents in Assam, Hon'ble Minister directed that strict action be taken against such poachers and that all necessary action be taken to prevent the concurrence of such incidents and the culprits be brought to book.
8. The Celebrations of the World Elephant Day 2025 will be held in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Annexure 1**List of participants****Sl. No Name & Designation**

1. Shri. Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister, EFCC
2. Shri. Tanmay Kumar, Secretary, MoEF&CC
3. Shri. Sushil Kumar Awasthi, DGF & SS, MoEF&CC
4. Dr Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, MS (NTCA) & ADG (PT&E), MoEF&CC
5. Shri. Ramesh Kumar Pandey, ADGF
6. Shri. Anjan Kumar Mohanty, ADG (FC)
7. Shri Pravir Pandey, AS & FA, MoEF&CC
8. Dr Sanjayan Kumar, IGF (PT&E)
9. Shri Ajaya Kumar Naik, Chief Wildlife Warden, Andhra Pradesh
10. Shri. N. Tam, Chief Wildlife Warden, Arunachal Pradesh
11. Dr Vinay Gupta, Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam
12. Shri. Prem Kumar, Chief Wildlife Warden, Chhattisgarh
13. Shri. Sunder Lal, CCF, Haryana
14. Shri. Amitabh Gautam, PCCF& Chief Wildlife Warden, Himachal Pradesh
15. Shri. Shaba Alam Ansari, CCF Jharkhand
16. Shri. Subhash K Malkhede, Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka
17. Shri. Pramod G Krishnan, Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala
18. Shri. Subharajan, Chief Wildlife Warden, Madhya Pradesh
19. Shri. M Srinivas Rao, Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra
20. Shri. H C Choudhary, Chief Wildlife Warden, Meghalaya
- 21.

- Shri Vedpal Singh, Chief Wildlife Warden, Nagaland
22. Shri. Prem Kumar Jha, Chief Wildlife Warden, Odisha
 23. Ms. Shikha Mehra, Chief Wildlife Warden, Rajasthan
 24. Shri. Rakesh Kumar Dogra, Chief Wildlife Warden, Tamil Nadu
 25. Shri. Pravin Agrawal, PCCF (P&D), Tripura
 26. Shri. Ranjan Kumar Mishra, Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttarakhand
 27. Shri. Lalit Verma, APCCF, Uttar Pradesh
 28. Shri. Sandeep Suriyal, Chief Wildlife Warden, West Bengal
 29. Dr K. K. Sarma, Member Steering Committee
 30. Shri. P. C. Tyagi, Member Steering Committee
 31. Shri. B S Bonal, Member Steering Committee
 32. Dr Sandeep Kumar Tiwari, Member Steering Committee
 33. Dr Anil Kumar Singh, Representative from WWF-India
 34. Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Member Steering Committee
 35. Shri. Virendra Tiwari, Director, Wildlife Institute of India
 36. Ms. Ruchika Rishi, Additional Director, WCCB
 37. Dr. Gaurav Sharma, Scientist-F & Officer-In Charge, Representative from ZSI
 38. Dr. S K Singh, Scientist F and HOO, Northern Regional Centre Dehradun, BSI
 39. Shri Paritosh Gautam, Add. Div. RM/ Operation NR
 40. Shri Piyush Pathak, Sr. Div. Eng.NR
 41. Shri Piyush Pathak, Sr. Div. Eng.I, NR
 42. Director, IGNFA, Special Invitee
 43. Dr. Bilal Habib, Scientist F, WII, Special Invitee
 44. Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist G & NO, Elephant Cell, WII
 45. Shri. Suneet Bhardwaj, AIGF (PT & E), MoEF&CC
 46. Dr Rajendra Kumar, Scientist D (PT & E), MoEF&CC
 47. Dr Aju Mathew George, Scientist C (PT & E), MoEF&CC

48. Dr. Anukul Nath, Scientist C & ANO, Elephant Cell, WII
49. R R Raju CE/C/NR
50. Gaurav Sirola, Consultant B, PE