

**APPEAL OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT ON
WORLD ELEPHANT DAY 2017**

On August 12, 2017, the celebration of World Elephant Day is to bring attention to the urgent plight of Asian and African elephants. The elephant is loved, revered and respected by people and cultures around the world, yet we balance on the brink of seeing the last of this magnificent creature.

The escalation of poaching, habitat loss, human-elephant conflict and mistreatment in captivity are some threats to both African and Asian elephants. Working towards better protection for wild elephants, improving enforcement policies to prevent the illegal poaching and trade of ivory, conserving elephant habitats, better treatment for captive elephants and, when appropriate, reintroducing captive elephants into natural, protected sanctuaries are the goals that numerous elephant conservation organizations are focusing in and around the world.

Asian elephants are distributed along the Western Ghats of peninsular India across vegetation types such as grasslands, tropical evergreen forests, semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests and dry thorn forests, in addition to cultivated and secondary forests and scrublands. Although Asian elephants are declining in numbers overall, particularly in Southeast Asia, the population in the Western Ghats appears to be increasing.

According to WWF, in the 20th century, there were a few million African elephants and about 100,000 Asian elephants. Today, there are an estimated 450,000 - 700,000 African elephants and between 35,000 - 40,000 wild Asian elephants.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is pioneer in taking effective initiatives to protect this magnificent animal. The Project Elephant scheme is implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu in four elephant reserves viz. Nilgiris Eastern Ghats Elephant Reserve, Coimbatore Elephant Reserve, Anamalai Elephant Reserve and Periyar Elephant Reserve.

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Tamil Nadu is one of the leading States in elephant population and their habitat management.

The Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu has elephant camps at Kozhikamudhi near Top Slip in Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) at Theppakadu in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in the Nilgiris, Meghamalai Wild life sanctuary, and at Chadivayal in Pooluvampatti Range of the Coimbatore Forest Division. The camps have a sizeable number of elephants that were either rescued when in distress or those orphaned calves. The elephant camps are proving to be a major tourist attraction.

Other initiatives include digging elephant proof trenches along the forest boundaries in Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Erode, Dindigul, Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari and Tiruppur districts besides carrying out other activities like construction of percolation ponds, check dams and water troughs, maintenance of elephant proof trenches, early warning system, trip wire alarm system and tranquilizing and translocation of problematic elephants in Vellore, Salem, Dharmapuri circles, etc., for which various projects have been sanctioned.

Habitat loss, Degradation, Fragmentation are some of the threats for the Asian elephants. In this regard, we all together on this day take up small steps for conservation of elephant population.

Director of Environment