



# Meeting of Project Elephant

## Why in News?

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee meeting of [Project Elephant](#), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched a **field manual named-Field Manual for Managing [Human-Elephant Conflicts \(HEC\) in India-to guide forest staffers dealing with HEC](#)** in major elephant range states.

- The manual has been prepared by the ministry, along with the [Wildlife Institute of India \(WWI\)](#) and [World Wide Fund for Nature \(WWF India\)](#).
- It contains the detailed best practices of **minimizing human-elephant conflict**. It is drafted with the **aim of providing forest officials/ departments and other stakeholders with guidance towards interventions to help mitigate Human Elephant Conflict**, both in emergencies and when conflict poses a recurring challenge.

## What are the Key Points Related to Elephants?

- **Current Data on Elephants in India:**
  - India is home to approximately around **27,000 Asian Elephants**, which is the world's largest population of the species.
  - As per Elephant Census (2017), **Karnataka has the highest number of elephants** (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).
- **Asian Elephants:**
  - **About:**
    - There are **three subspecies of Asian elephant** which are the **Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan**.
    - The Indian subspecies has the widest range and accounts for most of the remaining elephants on the continent.
      - The **elephant herd is led by the oldest and largest female member** (known as the matriarch). This herd includes the daughters of the matriarch and their offspring.
      - Elephants have the **longest-known gestational (pregnancy) period** of all mammals, lasting up to **680 days (22 months)**.
      - **Females between 14 - 45 years may give birth to calves** approximately every four years with the mean interbirth intervals increasing to five years by age 52 and six years by age 60.
    - **Global Population:** Estimated 20,000 to 40,000.
  - **Protection Status:**
    - [IUCN Red List:](#) Endangered.
    - [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972:](#) Schedule I.
    - [CITES:](#) Appendix I
- **African Elephants:**
  - **About:**
    - There are **two subspecies** of African elephants, **the Savanna (or bush) elephant and the Forest elephant**.
    - **Global Population:** Around 4,00,000.
    - Earlier in July 2020, [Botswana \(Africa\) witnessed the death of hundreds of elephants](#).

- **Protection Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List Status:**
    - **African Savanna Elephant:** Endangered.
    - **African Forest Elephant:** Critically Endangered
  - **CITES:** Appendix II
- **Threats:**
  - Escalation of poaching.
  - Habitat loss.
  - **Human-elephant conflict.**
  - Mistreatment in captivity.
  - Abuse due to elephant tourism.
  - Rampant mining, Corridor destruction.

## What are the Steps Taken for Conservation?

- Plans and programmes to **arrest their poachers and killers.**
- Declaration and **establishment of various elephant reserves** across the states. For example, Mysuru and Dandeli elephant reserves in Karnataka.
- **Cleaning areas from lantana and eupatorium** ([invasive species](#)) as they prevent the growth of grass for elephants to feed on.
- **Barricades** to prevent man-elephant conflicts.
- Measures for **establishment of a cell to study forest fire** prevention.
- **Gaj Yatra** which is a **nationwide awareness campaign** to celebrate elephants and highlights the necessity of securing elephant corridors.
- The [Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants \(MIKE\) programme](#), launched in 2003, is an international collaboration that tracks trends in information related to the illegal killing of elephants from across Africa and Asia, to monitor effectiveness of field conservation efforts.
- **Project Elephant:** It is a [centrally sponsored scheme](#) and was launched in February 1992 for the [protection of elephants](#), their habitats and corridors.
  - The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change **provides financial and technical support to major elephant range states** in the country through the project.
- Even **mahouts** (people who work with, ride and tend to elephants) and their families play an important part in the welfare of elephants.
- Recently, the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) upheld the 2011 order of the Madras High Court (HC) on the Nilgiris elephant corridor, affirming the [right of passage](#) of the animals and the closure of resorts in the area.

## UPSC Civil Services Exam Previous Year Questions

**Q. With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements: (2020)**

1. The leader of an elephant group is a female.
2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months.
3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only.
4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

**Ans: (a)**

**Source: DTE**

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/meeting-of-project-elephant>