



Steering Committee Meeting of Project Elephant

Why in News?

The [21st Steering Committee Meeting](#) of [Project Elephant](#) at the **Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Dehradun**, chaired by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, focused on addressing the critical issue of [human-elephant conflict](#).

- The meeting reviewed ongoing initiatives, including action plans for conflict management, and emphasized the involvement of local communities in conservation efforts.

Key Points

- **Elephant:**
 - Elephant is the [Natural Heritage Animal](#) of India.
 - Elephants are considered a "**Keystone Species**" as they play a critical role in maintaining the balance and health of forest ecosystems.
 - They are **known for their exceptional intelligence**, boasting the largest brain size of any land animal.
 - The Indian elephant (***Elephas maximus***) is found in the central and southern [Western Ghats](#), **Northeast India, eastern India and northern India** and in some parts of southern peninsular India.
 - It is included in **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and in **Appendix I of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna \(CITES\)](#)**.
 - **Asian elephants (Indian)** are classified as Endangered on the [IUCN Red List](#) due to habitat loss, human-elephant conflict, and [poaching](#).
- **Project Elephant:**
 - Project Elephant was **launched by the Government of India in the year 1992** as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with following objectives:
 - To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors
 - To address issues of man-animal conflict
 - Welfare of captive elephants
 - The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** provides financial and technical support to major elephant range states in the country through Project Elephant.
- **Shivalik Elephant Reserve in Uttarakhand:**
 - It was **established in 2002** as part of the "**Project Elephant**" initiative.
 - It's known for having one of the highest densities of elephants in India.
 - The reserve encompasses several protected areas, including [Rajaji National Park](#), [Corbett Tiger Reserve](#), and [Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary](#).

Note: [World Elephant Day](#) is observed **annually on 12th August** to raise awareness about the conservation status and challenges faced by **Asian and African elephants in the wild**.

- In 2025, the celebration will take place in **Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu**, where the prestigious **Gaj Gaurav Awards** will also be presented to honour contributions to elephant conservation.

ELEPHANT



Drishti IAS

4 Main Species of Elephant

Species	Found in	IUCN Red List Status	Habitat
Indian	Asia	EN (CITES - Appendix I, WPA - Schedule I)	Subtropical broadleaf forest, tropical broadleaf moist forest, dry forest, grassland
Sumatran	Asia	CR	Broadleaf moist tropical forests
Savanna (Bush)	Africa	EN	All sub-Saharan Africa except for Central Africa's dense tropical forest
Forest	Africa	CR	Dense Tropical Forests

Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*)

Largest Land Mammal on Asian Continent
National Heritage Animal of India

► Top 5 Indian States by Maximum Elephant Population: (As per elephant census 2017)

- Karnataka > Assam > Kerala > Tamil Nadu > Odisha

► Social Structure:

- Female elephants are more social than males; form herd (generally 5-7)
- Led by the oldest female, the 'matriarch'
- Males usually live alone

► Threats:

- Habitat Fragmentation
- Poaching for Ivory
- Human-Elephant Conflict
- Mistreatment in Captivity

► Conservation Efforts:

- Gaj Sookhna App (2022)
- Gaj Yatra (2017)
- Hathi Mere Sathi campaign (2011)
- National Elephant Corridor project (2005)
- Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme (2003)
- Project Elephant (1992)

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