

News Briefs

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1. Soon, gates on border to allow Indian elephants to visit Bangladesh and return

Hindustan Times - 28.7.2017

Illegal migrants from Bangladesh entering India is a contentious issue between both neighbours. While New Delhi contends large-scale influx from across the border, Dhaka has denied these migrants are their citizens.

There was no such difference though when officials of both nations agreed on Thursday to construct gates along the border to allow free and safe passage for wild elephants. Setting up of the gates was one of the 18 points of action agreed between both countries at the 2nd Indo-Bangladesh dialogue on trans-boundary conservation of elephants held at Shillong.

Trans-border migration of animals is a natural process. But due to erection of border fences, there have been occasions when elephants have broken barriers to continue on their route. "The gates will allow them safe passage," India's director general of forest Siddhanta Das told HT.

Officials have identified 12 points in Meghalaya and one in Assam along the border, which are used by wild elephants to travel to Bangladesh, where the gates will be constructed. It is estimated nearly 20 pachyderms from India move to Bangladesh annually around winter and return later. "We will be tracking these animals and use the services of security and forest personnel on both sides of the border to ensure that the elephants don't face any problems," said Das.

Both countries also agreed to discourage and regulate construction of electric fences to protect crops in the areas, which fall in the routes

taken by the elephants to prevent deaths due to electrocution. Measures to prevent or bring down incidents of human-elephant conflict while the pachyderms crisscross between both countries, such as setting up warning systems and planting of trees to act as bio-fence, were also discussed.

2. 39 elephants trapped in wells in 4 years (India)

Orissa Post - 31.7.2017

The rampant felling of trees is one of the reasons forcing elephants to stray into human habitats in search of food and water. During their search, the pachyderms get killed as they fall into pits, waterholes and isolated wells. Many environmentalists, animal lovers and forest officials have raised concerns about the development.

A recent study said at least 39 elephants were trapped in 24 wells in the last four years in the state when they ventured into villages for food and water. Five of them lost their lives while three were rendered critical. Ganjam leads the list with six elephants reportedly trapped at wells in four separate incidents from the district.

The first such incident in Ganjam was reported from Kadapada village under Buguda forest range in December 25, 2012. The pachyderm was rescued then and safely guided back to the forest. In January 19, 2013, an elephant died after getting trapped in an isolated well in a forest near Humma village under Khallikote forest range.

Similarly, a mother elephant and calf were trapped in a well near Dubapali village under Tarsingh forest range. After the officials rescued and helped return the mother elephant to the

forest, they looked to save the calf. But the mother elephant had already returned to the forest and the calf looked around in search of its mother and died later due to starvation. This incident drew huge flak from several quarters then as many people slammed the irresponsibility of officials. The same day, another elephant and its calf were trapped in another well near Kushapali village. However, both of them were rescued and the officials safely guided back them to the forest.

Though there has been a demand for the constructin of platforms around wells, the forest officials pay no heed. Locals say isolated wells should be spotted and buried to curb such incidents.

3. Advance payment for human kills by jumbos (India)

The New Indian Express - 16.9.2017

In a major move, Wildlife Wing of Forest Department have created a revolving fund for payment of compassionate grant to victims of human kills by elephants and other wild animals. Under the new scheme, eight divisions designated as high-depredation prone will get an annual revolving fund of Rs 5 lakh each while 11 others, placed in medium-depredation category, will get Rs 3 lakh per year to meet advance payment for killings by elephants and other wild animals.

The rest divisions are treated as less-depredation prone and will be allocated Rs 1 lakh each a year, sources in the Wildlife Wing said. The financial requirement for the revolving fund will be sourced from Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) pool.

According to estimates of the Wildlife Wing, every year about 60 persons are killed by elephants, while another 15 fall prey to other wild animals. In most cases, the deaths trigger law and order situation and public agitation over payment of compassionate grant which is riddled with procedural bottlenecks such as post-mortem reports and legal heir certificate which take their own sweet time.

4. Elephant tramples 2 Rohingyas to death in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh)

The Daily Star - 18.9.2017

Two Rohingya refugees, including a child, were trampled to death and five others injured as a wild elephant was crossing through a region where refugee camps have been set up in Ukhia upazila of Cox's Bazar early today.

The deceased were identified are Shamsul Alam, 55, and two-year-old Shahidul Alam, the OC said. The refugees have recently entered Bangladesh and took shelter in the camps to escape persecution by Myanmar's military forces in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.

In a survey published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on March 21, 2017, the total number of resident wild elephants was investigated in Bangladesh. It gave an official estimate of 268 elephants, all residing in south-eastern forest areas of the country. This initiative also mapped out the routes elephants follow around the year and managed to mark 12 crucial small passages, known as elephant corridors, which they use to travel between forests. The study has also pointed out 57 elephant crossing-points on the international borders with India and Myanmar.

5. Mysterious herd of elephants marches out of hiding in southern Vietnam

VN Express - 18.9.2017

A previously unseen herd of elephants has been spotted in Vietnam's southern province of Dong Nai, according to forest management officials. While it's great news for conservation efforts, it could be a curse on the family of 15, which includes four calves.

Officials believe that this herd has never been seen before, because the herd they have been tracking in recent years is led by a different male and only has one or two calves. There's low chance that the animals have given birth to more calves in such a short time, they said.

The news of the herd has been covered widely by local media and hailed as good news for conservation efforts. But officials familiar with wildlife protection in Vietnam said it's not always a blessing. Media coverage about incidents like this helps to raise awareness about the need for protection, but it also alerts poachers to the animals' location.

6. Electric fence poses serious threat against wild elephants (Thailand)

Thai PBS - 20.9.2017

Electric fence installed by farmers to protect their farm crops from elephants has proven to be one of the biggest threats against the animals, having killed almost 10 of them in the past two years. The death of a bull elephant in a para rubber plantation in Ban Khao Khong, Tambon Pawa of Kaeng Hang Maew district of Chanthaburi on Sept 17 and the death of another elephant one day afterward in Kanchanaburi province were attributable to electric shock from electric fence.

Farmers living in areas located near the habitats of the pachyderms used to resort to firecrackers or install barb-wired fence to protect their crops from hungry elephants looking for food, but with little success. Hence, many of them turned to electric fence using electricity generated from a 12-volt car battery as the deterrent which does not work effectively because of the thick skin of the animals. Then, they turned to the 220-volt household electricity by attaching the household electric wire to the fence which has proven to be effective – and deadly too.

During June-September this year, five were electrocuted. The most infamous incident took place in 2015 in La-u forest of Huey Sat Yai district of Prachuab Khiri Khan when three elephants were electrocuted and found lying dead next to each other.

7. Elephant management: A jumbo challenge (India)

Deccan Herald - 23.9.2017

The population of elephants in the country has declined by nearly 10% in the last five years, as per figures released by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). In 2012 the population of elephants was estimated to be around 30,000. In 2017, it is said to be just over 27,000. Concerns regarding elephant habitats and their population remain.

Conversely, human deaths due to encounters with wild elephants have risen across the country. In the last four years, one human life was lost every day due to human-elephant conflict. A total of 1465 people have been killed in that time. Annually 400 people lose their lives to this phenomenon.

An estimated 27,000 wild elephants are distributed over an area of 65,000 km², which covers less than 3% of the country's geographical area. These mega mammals are dispersed across four large regions. They are spread across 32 elephant reserves, which comprise protected areas and forests.

8. Elephants create panic (Bangladesh)

The Daily Star - 27.9.2017

Panic still haunts the villagers after two people were trampled to death by an elephant in Kulaura Upazila district recently. The deceased are mahout Goni Mia and Mangal Kharia. During this time of the year, male elephants come into musth, a period of about a month and a half when they are impatient to mate, said Divisional Forest Officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department Mihir Kumar Doe.

In the musth period, the elephants become angry when they see any people around them, added the forest officer. Saju Mia, son of deceased Goni Mia, said his father was heading towards his workplace at Marina Tea Garden when suddenly the elephant became angry, grabbed him with its trunk and trampled him to death on Saturday.

On September 3, the same elephant killed Mangal Kharia in Pootichara area. Local people said after Mangal's death, Moin Uddin, owner of

the elephant, agreed to settle the matter with Tk 1 lakh compensation for the deceased's family. Moin said he employed the animal for carrying logs, adding that he failed to control the elephant, as he could not manage any mate for the animal.

9. Elephants are irreplaceable! finds a study

Research Matters - 5.10.2017

The largest land animal on the planet has a unique role to play in the ecosystem – distributing seeds of certain species of fruiting trees. “We conserve elephants because they are intelligent, fascinating, beautiful, and an important link to our national and global heritage”, says Dr. Nitin Sekar from the Indian Institute of Science. “However, our research provides further evidence that when we lose unusual species like the Asian elephant across parts of their range, such loss can have a local or regional effect on how an ecosystem functions.

It is crucial for a mother tree to disperse her seeds far and wide from where she is. Saplings that germinate from seeds just beside the mother tree may not receive enough sunlight and will be forced to compete for the nutrients amongst themselves. Also, a high density of saplings at one place may attract herbivores. Fruit eating animals and birds, called frugivores, do this service by eating fruits, travelling far and defecating seeds contained in them.

For this mutually beneficial exercise, large bodied herbivores are particularly suitable. They consume large amounts of fruits, and carry a large number of seeds. An elephant particularly has a seed-friendly digestive physiology. And they also move around for kilometres at a time, thus dispersing seeds far and wide.

But this scenario could change. “Local extinction (or extirpation) could more easily happen in a variety of settings across South and Southeast Asia, especially as elephants lose habitat to unplanned development, or if poaching for elephants ramps up to meet new demand for elephant parts”, says Sekar.

10. Watch tower coming up to prevent death of elephants by trains (India)

India.com - 5.10.2017

A tall watchtower is being erected by the forest department near the railway track between Humma and Rambha to prevent death of elephants in train accidents in Ganjam district. Forest staff would also be deployed there to keep an eye on the movement of elephants, a senior official said.

“We have constructed a watch tower at Satrusol village with an investment of around Rs 8 lakh. The forest staff will keep a tab on the movement of elephants and inform railway officials of Khurda road division. Trains will slow down once they enter the area, if elephants are found,” said the Divisional Forest Officer.

Besides, solar fencing would be taken up for 3 km on one side of the railway track to prevent the elephants from crossing the track, he said. The DFO added that at a recent meeting of forest and railway officials, a decision to share information about the movement of elephants on a daily basis was taken. The elephants migrate from Chandaka elephant reserve to the area. It was also decided that vegetation on the sides of railway tracks would be cleaned and signage boards erected to warn drivers about the possibility of the presence of elephants ahead.

11. SLAF vets called into capture wild elephants (Sri Lanka)

The Sunday Times Sri Lanka - 7.10.2017

Veterinarians from the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) had to be called into help capture two wild elephants as veterinarians attached to the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) refused to capture them. The wild elephants were roaming around the Kuttigala area over the past several months.

However, the DWC was unable to summon its vets to capture the elephants as they have decided to refrain from assisting in the capture of wild

elephants from September 15 on account of several demands.

Accordingly, Kuttigala Police had to obtain a court order from the Embilipitiya Magistrate's Court to get assistance from veterinarians of the SLAF to capture the animals. Accordingly, the elephants were captured today after a two-day operation with the assistance of the SLAF's vets and DWC officers. The elephants, aged between 15 and 18 years, will be taken to a forest reserve and released, the DWC said.

12. Will Myanmar's elephants die out because their skin is being made into jewellery?

The Guardian - 9.10.2017

With the ivory trade virtually dead, poachers are coming up with new markets for elephant products – much to the horror of campaigners. The extent to which humans can find a use for every part of an elephant seems infinite. Once, it was a desire for ivory that was to blame for the destruction of populations, but now that countries have cracked down on that – including a ban in the UK on the sale of antique ivory – markets for other products are being found. The latest fad is for elephant skin, which is being sold as jewellery and a cure for eczema.

In Myanmar there are thought to be only 1000–2000 elephants left, down from 10,000 two decades ago. Female Asian elephants, which were always protected to a degree because they don't have tusks, are now being targeted.

Previously, elephants found skinned were rare, says Christy Williams, country director of the World Wildlife Fund's Myanmar office. "Then we had a [lot] of poachings in Myanmar, where maybe 35–40 elephants were killed in a short space of time, largely for the skin trade. It started this year." Traffic [the wildlife trade monitoring organisation] puts the price of elephant skin at about \$120 (£90) a kilo – up from \$10–\$20 a kilo 10 years ago.

Elephants have even been shot with poison darts, which take days to kill them. Poachers track

them, then skin them. "Last year, we went to a place on the Myanmar-China border and found significant quantities of elephant skin for sale," says an investigator for the charity Elephant Family. In China, "people showed us beads made out of elephant skin and talked about how it was a new thing they were trying out. We have also been conducting research on online forums. There is a lot of talk about this jewellery."

Trade in elephant skin in itself is not new, but the market in jewellery seems to be, he says. (It shouldn't be confused however with beads made from gemstone and called elephant skin.) "That's the worrying thing. When these things take off, they take off quickly."

13. Dried elephant meat seized in Yangon (Myanmar)

The Myanmar Times - 13.10.2017

More than 20 viss (about 32 kg) of dried elephant meat were seized in Taikkyi township, Yangon Region, U Thein Toe, director of the region forestry department said. The dried elephant meat was roasted in a tent located in No. 74 Ohkan forest reserve, just about 40 miles from Okkan and Taikkyi township, he told The Myanmar Times on October 11.

There is a widespread of illegal trading of elephant meat, ivory and skin. Moreover, female elephants and calves are also killed, said experts involved in elephant protection work in Myanmar on World Elephant Day, August 8. According to the Forestry Department, there were 18 elephants killed by poachers from 2010 to 2017 (July) in Yangon Region. About six were killed in Taikkyi township and Okkan until July this year. It is estimated that the elephant population in the country is between 1400 and 2000 elephants.

14. Rare wild elephants go on rampage in Vietnamese village

Qatar Tribune - 13.10.2017

Rare wild elephants went on a rampage destroying crops in a village in northern Vietnam,

state media reported. The elephants emerged from the forest late Tuesday night in Nghe An province's Bai Da village, the Dan Tri news website reported. Farmer Phan Van Dai found the animals destroying his acacia crops and called local authorities for help.

Local police were unable to scare away the elephants with drums and fire and the elephants continued their feast, destroying at least two hectares of crops before returning to the forest three hours later. According to the Vietnam Administration of Forestry, only around 120 elephants are thought to remain in Vietnam.

15. Rare bacteria in dead elephant sparks alarm (India)

The New Indian Express - 16.10.2017

For the first time, *Chromobacterium violaceum*, a highly pathogenic organism, has been detected in an elephant which was found dead in a Dhenkanal forest in May. The Centre for Wildlife Health, which isolated the rare bacteria after a series of high level investigations in Odisha and outside, has informed the Wildlife Wing of the Forest and Environment Department and sought a further investigation to ascertain if it exists in the elephant corridor of the district.

Known to be highly pathogenic, the bacteria can be fatal when infected by humans though it happens rarely. The very fact that it has been found in an elephant shows its existence in the region. "It is for the first time in the world that *Chromobacterium violaceum* was found to have caused death of a wild elephant which is a significant discovery," said Prof Niranjana Sahu, who heads the Department of Preventive Medicine.

The Centre, which has preserved the bacteria, had to conduct the gene sequencing at a standard laboratory in Bengaluru to arrive at the conclusion. "This needs elaborate investigation which is why we have written to the PCCF (Wildlife) seeking permission. The investigation should be carried out in the elephant corridors," he informed.

16. Last year records highest number of human, elephant deaths since 2012 (Sri Lanka)

The Daily News - 25.10.2017

Last year marked the highest number of human and elephant deaths compared to statistics since 2012, Wildlife Conservation Department 2016 annual report indicated. According to the report, 279 elephant deaths were reported last year, while 88 people including 11 females and four children had died in elephant attacks. Compared with 2015, the number of elephant deaths had increased by 74 and the number of human deaths had increased by 25.

Gunshots killed 52 elephants, hakka patas 47 elephants, 26 due to electrocution, six due to poisoning, train accidents killed 12 and other accidents killed 17. The causes of deaths of 54 elephants were unknown while 35 elephants had died of natural causes.

In addition to distributing Thunder Flare and Serpent Flare, two especially designed crackers to chase away the wild animals, the Department erected 287 km of new electric fences in 2016 to mitigate wild elephant invasions in agricultural and plantation areas.

17. Villagers in Kedah shook by wild elephants, how can we co-exist with these gentle giants? (Malaysia)

Malaysian Digest - 25.10.2017

Over 900 villagers residing at Kampung Tanjung Pari, Mukim Siong endured a moment of anxiety, when a herd of elephants were found roaming in the village and subsequently destroying their crops. The Tanjung Pari Village Development and Security Committee (JKKK) Chairman Taib Man shared with Berita Harian that the villagers refrained from going to the farm as they fear of crossing paths with the wild elephants that are often wondering through the night.

As it turns out, elephants are not solely at fault in HEC as a video uploaded by TED-Ed underlined that most elephant attacks on human villagers

occur as a result of a rebellion against poaching and culling. With elephants having impeccably strong memory, being able to understand emotions as well as being community animals that are able to forge bonds, elephants suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder when they experience losses.

18. Wild elephants go on rampage, destroying sugarcane plantations (Nepal)

Kathmandu Tribune - 26.10.2017

Wild elephants straying from the Shuklaphanta National Park have gone on rampage, destroying sugarcane farming at Laljhadi rural municipality-4 in the district. A herd of around 20 elephants enters the village, and destroys sugarcane farming grown on five bighas of the farmland by more than half a dozen local farmers, said the affected farmers.

The incident continues for the past week, and sugarcanes worth more than Rs. 800,000 have been destroyed so far in the rampage, said local farmer Sacha Rana. As a result, the farmers have incurred a huge loss. "I started sugarcane farming through a bank loan. I wonder how to pay back the loan as the farming has been destroyed by the elephants," said another affected farmer Ramdas Rana. Their repeated calls to concerned authority to resolve the problem have fallen on a deaf ear, he complained.

19. Ensuring the survival of elephants in Laos: A matter of economics

Phys.Org - 1.11.2017

Asian elephant populations in Laos, which are under a process of commodification, have dropped by half in the last 30 years. According to researchers from CNRS and the French Beauval Nature association for conservation and research, the dynamics of elephant populations depend heavily on the socio-economic practices of the country and elephant owners.

The setting-up of a "maternity-leave" system to compensate owners for their losses of income

during breeding period would contribute to the species' long-term survival. The findings of this research are published in Scientific Reports on November 1st 2017.

Researchers developed a bio-economic model to assess the long-term impact of socio-economic strategies on the viability of the species. This model includes a year-to-year estimate of the elephant population based on demographic data such as age, sex and location that were collected regularly by the Lao department of livestock, as well as fifty interviews focusing on elephant owners breeding practices.

Projected over a period of 100 years, this individual-based micro-economic model simulates the elephant owners' decision-making process and raises a major issue: is breeding - the birth of an elephant calf - more profitable than working for the logging or tourism industries?

20. Seven elephants successfully rescued from a pond (Thailand)

Thai PBS - 12.11.2017

With the help of a backhoe from the highways office of Chachoengsao, seven elephants were successfully rescued from a pond in Bang Ang Ta Poeng after they fell into the pond since about 2 am on Sunday.

Mr Decha Nilvichien, chief of Khao Ang Ruenai wildlife sanctuary, said that the backhoe which arrived at Bang Ang Ta Poeng village at about 8 am dug up the soil to form a slope leading to the pond allowing the trapped elephants to walk out of the pond. He said that two elephants firstly walked out from the pond, then followed by one elephant after another until all the animals were out of danger at about 8.40 am.

However, Mr Decha said a team of forest rangers was sent to follow the herd into the jungle toward Ban Noen Krabok in Tha Takiab district of Chachoengsao. The seven elephants, including two babies, accidentally fell into the pond as they were scouring for food in a rubber plantation in Ban Ang Ta Poeng. They were unable to get out

because the embankment of the pond is steep and slippery.

21. Asian elephant population is declining steadily. Because, humans (India)

India Today - 24.11.2017

Villagers festooned with flowers the bodies of two female elephants killed by a passenger train en route to Guwahati. Stragglers in a herd of about 15 trying to cross the tracks, the elephants were hit around midnight on Saturday, November 18, as they searched for food. Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary is nearby, but Assam forest officials insisted that the elephants did not normally venture onto the tracks.

The Asian elephant has been an endangered species for over 30 years now, their numbers declining by an estimated 50% over the past seven decades or so. India is home to just over 27,000 jumbos, with nearly 6,000 living in Assam. Loss of habitat is one of the primary reasons for the declining elephant population and conservationists warn that the pressure exerted by human encroachment continues to force elephants to seek out new routes, leading to such deadly encounters.

22. Myanmar army's landmines put elephants at risk

Dhaka Tribune - 26.11.2017

Wildlife conservationists have expressed concern regarding the deaths and injuries to elephants caused by landmines allegedly laid by Myanmar security forces along its border with Bangladesh. A wild elephant died after stepping on a landmine along Naikhongchari border area in Bandarban district. Confirming the death, Divisional Forest Officer of Lama Forest Division Md Kamal Uddin said: "The giant mammal sustained injuries Monday night after stepping on a landmine in the no-man's land along Naikhongchari border. "The elephant died the next day."

Some 350 elephants live in Bangladesh while around 5000 of the large mammals live in

Myanmar. "The movement of elephants between the two countries will be disrupted due to the landmines laid along the border," he said, adding that the existence of the mammals will be put at great risk.

23. Chinese village builds barricades to fend off marauding wild elephants

South China Morning Post - 30.11.2017

Villagers in southwest China who have been plagued for years by rampaging wild elephants looking for food have welcomed a scheme to build a barrier to protect them. The pilot project to build an enclosure round Xiangyanqing in Yunnan province has been judged so successful that it will now be expanded to other villages in the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve, state television reported on Thursday.

Residents reported a dozen incidents in which elephants were kept out of the village in just over a month, Guo Xianming, director of the Asian elephants protection project in Xishuangbanna, told CCTV. The reserve hosts most of the country's wild Asian elephants, which number between 200 and 300, according to a study published by the country's Institute of Zoology.

The village introduced the barriers recently to cope with attacks from the wild elephants, which came looking for sugar cane and banana leaves and would eat their grain and destroy electric appliances in their houses. The locals have also established a public liability insurance system, which will cover losses caused by wild elephants with government funds. They have also set up watch teams to observe the elephants and monitor the situation.

24. Chinese farmer digs up ivory fossils dating back over 10,000 years

South China Morning Post - 5.12.2017

A farmer has unearthed fossilised ivory believed to be from an elephant living more than 10,000 years ago in northwest China. Yin Faping made the discovery on November 13 when he was

preparing to lay the foundation for his house in the county of Hanyin, Shaanxi province, Chinese Business View reported on Tuesday.

Pieced together, the 13 fossils are about one metre long and weigh 4.8 kg. The Shaanxi geological survey centre dated the fossils to the Neolithic period, according to the report. It is the second significant elephant discovery made in the region after a fossilised milk tooth was found there more than 30 years ago.

Researchers told the newspaper that the fossilised ivory could help them understand more about the history of the Han River Basin in the province. The county's cultural relics body is temporarily looking after the fossils and has proposed they be transferred to the Northwest University museum in Xian, the provincial capital.

25. Villagers get smartphone elephant alerts (China)

Ecns.cn - 16.12.2017

In Basan village, where nearly all of the 2,200 residents have smartphones, the mobile devices now provide updates on activities of nearby wild elephants - not just as reminders for wildlife observers, but as a safety alert. The village, in Southwest China's Yunnan province, has witnessed frequent visits by wild elephants in recent years, sometimes accompanied by safety threats.

"An elephant alert alliance has been formed voluntarily in the village," said local resident Huang Zhaowu. "Anyone who notices a wild elephant nearby will spread the alert on social media or share it on (WeChat) Moments," he said. Yunnan is China's only habitat of wild Asian elephants, and the wild elephant population has soared there from 170 in the 1970s to about 300 now, thanks to protection efforts.

The growing number of wild elephants has resulted in more conflicts between local people and elephants. Last week, an adult elephant smashed the front window of a bus and pushed a car off the road. No injuries were reported.

26. Thermal imaging cameras to be installed to track elephants at night (India)

The Times of India - 17.12.2017

The forest department has planned to install four advanced thermal imaging cameras to monitor movement of wild elephants along railway tracks to prevent elephant being hit by locomotives. Two cameras will be fixed at Madukkarai and another two at IOB Colony near Marudhamalai and Thadagam.

"Earlier, we bought a handheld thermal imaging camera and used it to track elephants movement in brick kilns at Thadagam a few days ago. We followed a female elephant and its calf roaming there. The camera senses the body heat and provide footage," said S. Ramasubramanian, conservator of forests, Coimbatore circle.

Besides to the monitor elephants the forest department had erected a watchtower near Madukkarai. Here already the department had fixed advanced CCTV cameras, which track elephants during day. In order to track them at night two thermal imaging cameras will be installed. "We are going to install two cameras on the watchtower at Madukkarai. Each camera costs about Rs 10 lakh. They will be fixed atop of the tower. These will help to cover vast areas during night hours and inform locomotive drivers about elephants movement near the track," said Ramasubramanian.

27. Life imprisonment for elephant killers (Sri Lanka)

The Daily Mirror - 21.12.2017

The government had decided to amend Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance to implement life imprisonment for those found guilty of killing wild elephants. The cabinet paper submitted by Sustainable Development and Wildlife Minister Gamini Jayawickrama Perera had proposed to conduct combined operations by Wildlife Officers, Police Officers, and Armed Forces to protect Wild Elephants and Wildlife Resources in Sri Lanka.

A Combined Task Force comprised of Wildlife Conservation Department, Police Special Task Force, and Armed Forces would be established for this purpose. It was also decided to obtain help of Forest Conservation Department and Sri Lanka Mahaweli Authority on this matter.

28. 96-kg baby Asian elephant born in SW China

Xinhua - 22.12.2017

After a 19-month-pregnancy, a 16-year-old Asian elephant delivered a healthy calf in a breeding and rescue centre in southwest China's Yunnan Province. According to centre staff, the mother elephant, named Yinen, has been living in the centre for about nine years. Last April, she naturally mated with a male elephant in the centre, with the help of "manual intervention."

Yinen had a half-hour labor before giving birth to a female calf, weighing 96 kg and 91 cm tall, shortly after 6:20 a.m., according to Bao Mingwei from the centre. Bao said the baby elephant was able to stand on its own within minutes of the delivery, and was named Dongzhi, the Chinese term for "winter solstice," the day she was born.

Asian elephants are under first-class national protection. China has about 300 elephants, mostly in Yunnan. Since its establishment in 2008, the centre has rescued 12 wild Asian elephants, nine of which are still receiving medical care in the centre. The centre has delivered five calves so far.

29. Elephants sighted in Ha Tinh National Park (Vietnam)

VietNamNet Bridge - 25.12.2017

According to the park's deputy director, Nguyen Thuong Hai, the park is going to survey the number of elephants in the herd, which were discovered through the cameras and by residents living near the park's buffer zones. In recent weeks, rangers followed residents' reports and found elephant footprints in the park forest, including both mature and baby elephant footprints.

The footprints were scattered across three sites at the park, and rangers could not identify if they were footprints of elephants from the same herd or from different herds. Later, the rangers set up camera traps and captured photos of two mature elephants. Hai said the survey will be conducted in a forest area of 20,000 ha in 25 zones of the park in order to affirm the presence of elephants.

The park will then set up a protection plan to take care of the rare mammals. In related news, rangers in Huong Son District last Saturday released eight masked palm civets and seven giant Asian pond turtles back to nature.

30. Pregnant elephant 'poisoned' in Indonesian palm plantation

Press Trust of India/AFP - 27.12.017

A pregnant elephant has been found dead in a palm oil plantation in Sumatra, in what authorities suspect was a deliberate poisoning, an official said today. The animal's body was found near the remote Seuneubok Bayu village in Aceh on December 22, after authorities received a tip off from locals, Aceh conservation centre head Sapto Aji Prabowo told AFP.

"The 25-year-old elephant had been dead for around 10 days when we got there," he said. "From the autopsy, we saw that its digestive organs turned black which the doctor said was a general indication of poisoning." The Sumatran elephant was carrying 13-month old male foetus and was at least six months short of giving birth. Locals have told authorities that several days before the carcass was discovered farmers had complained an elephant ate their fertiliser.

Sumatran elephant are critically endangered and a protected species, but rampant deforestation for plantations has reduced their natural habitat and brought them into conflict with humans. At least 11 wild elephants died in Aceh this year, most of them killed by humans, according to Prabowo. In January, authorities found a dead elephant without tusks in Aceh, along with its abandoned 11-month-old calf.