

## Interference in the Elephant Corridor: Its Effect and Mitigation

In South Bengal, especially in Jhargram district, the number of elephants has increased. Earlier during this period, the number of elephants was relatively less because elephant herds coming down from Dalma Hills in Jharkhand used to pass through the jungles of Purulia, Bankura, West Medinipur, and Jhargram to Orissa. Sometimes a few of them settle in the Mayur Jharna Elephant Reserve. Again, the herds of elephants would return to their old abode in November-December through the same route. This passage way of elephants is called the elephant corridor. But with fencing and canals cutting across Odisha's borders, elephants are no longer able to reach their traditional destinations. Therefore, the herd of elephants is currently staying in the Nayagram Police Station area of Jhargram district on the border of Odisha and will return back to Dalma Hills in due course. Herds of elephants can now be seen roaming around Jhargram district from June to November. There is no shortage of food for them as there are various crops and vegetables in the fields during monsoon and autumn. And when the paddy starts ripening from October to November, the herds of elephants go out in the silver lunar light, eat rice in the paddy field and return to the nearby forest in the dark of night.

As many elephants come down from the Dalma Hills, some elephants remain permanently in the scattered jungles of the Jungle Mahal. These elephants are called residential elephants and their numbers are increasing in the forests of Jungle Mahal in South Bengal. Meanwhile,

people have built houses around the jungles of the elephant habitat of Jangal Mahal. Not only do they build houses but also clear the forest to create farmland where they cultivate at least twice a year. All these houses and agricultural lands have been recorded by the people as their own property. If elephants see someone on their way, they can do whatever they need to do themselves. As a result, five people died in front of a group of elephants coming from Dalma Hills in just two months (July-August) of the year 2022. If there had been LED lights at the entrance to the village road, the herd of elephants would not have entered the village through that road and the lives of all these people would not have been lost. Where there is an incident of herd rampage, or in the elephant corridor, if a battery-operated electric wire is provided, then there would have been a possibility for the elephant group to go back. As soon as possible several teams should be formed to monitor the movement of elephants and they should be officially appointed by the forest department of the government. A sighting of these elephants, elephant trackers will alert the common people of the village as well as the forest department about the movements of the elephants, and as a result, the people of the village can be saved from the terrible situation like death by the elephant attacks.

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