

Project Elephant Achievements

S.S. Bist *

Sri Sampath S. Bist who has served as Director of Project Elephant for the last five years, is returning to his parent department in West Bengal as Principle Chief Conservator of Forest, Calcutta. The following is a list of achievement of Project Elephant.

- Total financial support to States increased from Rs.5.97 Cr in 1999-2000 to Rs.15.09 Cr in 2005-06. Total outlay of Project Elephant increased from Rs. 35 Cr during the IX Plan to Rs.71 Cr during the X Plan.

- Cases of poaching of tuskers for ivory came down from 62 (1999-2000) to 17 (2004-05).

- The first-ever evaluation of Project Elephant carried out during 2001-02 in collaboration with the State Forest Departments and Scientific Institutes.

- 25 Elephant Reserves (ERs) formally notified. MoEF's consent given to 2 ERs (Baitarini in Orissa and Ganga-Jamuna in U.P.). Three more ERs [South Orissa in Orissa, Deomali (South Arunachal) in Arunachal Pradesh and Khasi Hills in Meghalaya] in the pipeline.

- Perspective Plans ready for 15 Elephant Reserves.

- Use of GPS introduced in ERs.

- Use of microchips introduced for registration of domesticated elephants.

- The MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants) programme introduced in 10 ERs.

- The first country-wide synchronized-enumeration of elephants carried out in 2001-02. The first exclusive enumeration of elephants in Elephant Reserves conducted in 2005. Guidelines for enumeration of elephants issued. Sampling methods (Block Sampling and Dung Count with Retrospective Method of Calculating Decay Rate) formally introduced on a country-wide scale in 2005. Help of the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, enlisted.

- The first-ever status survey of domesticated elephants in India conducted in Dec. 2000-Jan. 2001. An expert committee to look into the status of domesticated elephants in India appointed (2003-04).

- Capacity-building programmes initiated in ERs: 4 ToT regional workshops and 3 regional training workshops on chemical immobilization and power fencing (in collaboration with the WII); followed by regular training courses for forest staff in ERs.

- Three field officers were sent for study tour to Kenya and Tanzania in January 2005.

- Refresher courses being organized for elephant veterinarians (So far 4 courses held at Kerala Agri.

University, Trichur, and 4 held at Assam Agri. University, Guwahati).

- Support provided to Assam and Kerala for organizing training programmes for mahouts.

- Concept of 'Elephant Day' introduced in ERs.

- Produced 'Living with Giants'—a documentary video-film on elephant conservation in India with the help of Ashish Chandola.

- Produced publications on Project Elephant in local languages (Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Bengali) in collaboration with the State Forest Departments.

- Sponsored a special issue of Indian Forester on Elephant Management and Conservation in India (Feb. 2002). Brought out publications on 'Management of Elephants in Captivity' and 'Techniques & Procedures for Post-Mortem of Elephants'.

- Logo of Project Elephant prepared.

- Regular coordination meetings of the regional members of the Steering Committee and Chief Wildlife Wardens held for the southern, eastern and north-eastern regions.

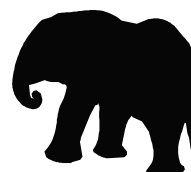
- Concept of 'Stakeholders' Advisory Committee' introduced in ERs.

- Concept of 'Janata Fencing' (Community-supported power fences) introduced in states.

- A database on Project Elephant prepared and maintained.

- Research programmes initiated with the help of the Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack (Developing high yielding varieties of paddy not relished by elephants; Developing elephant-proof storage bins for food grains; and Developing elephant repellants); Assam Agricultural University, Guwahati (Disease-management in captive elephants; and Anatomical studies of Asian elephant); and Wildlife Institute of India (Interstate monitoring of elephants in Eastern Region).

Another project (Efficacy of immuno-contraceptives on domesticated Asian cow elephants), in collaboration with Assam Agricultural University and International Elephant Foundation, is in the pipeline.



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