

## Man-Animal Conflict - Elephants Train Collisions

### What is the issue?

Elephants are often victims of train collisions and electric fences in the rising man-animal conflicts.

### How frequent are the deaths?

- **RTI data** - RTI reply by Project Elephant division of the MoEFCC shows killing of 1,160 elephants due causes other than natural causes over 11 years (till 2020).
- 741 deaths were due to electrocution; railway accidents accounted for 186 cases; poaching 169 and poisoning 64.
- **CAG Report** - Of the 29,964 elephants in India, nearly 14,580 are in the southern region.
- That a greater number of casualties getting reported are in elephant passages has been confirmed by the C&AG in its latest compliance audit report on the Ministry of Railways.

### How to save elephants from Electrocution?

- **Hanging Solar Powered Fences** - Electric fences or barbed wire fences can be replaced with hanging solar-powered fences, as has been planned in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- It will be installed on pillars and stainless steel wires will be hung from the main line. The fence is connected to a solar power supply point.
- Here small animals could freely and safely move under them.
- At the same time electric shock in such fences will be of mild intensity and will cause no harm to big animals.
- Such hanging fences could be employed across the forest fringes to prevent the entry of elephants from the woods to human habitations.
- They will be effective even in marshy and high conflict zones too.
- **Planting citronella and lemon grass** - This is done in Golaghat district of Assam. Elephant avoid coming to such areas due to its aroma.
- Planting such crops instead of electric fences is a viable alternative.
- At the same time authorities should ensure that there are no illegal electric fences or barbed wire fences.

- **Participation of local communities** - The critical role elephants play in biodiversity conservation must be highlighted, especially to those living in areas close to elephant corridors.
- **Wildlife crossings or eco-bridges** - The Environment Ministry and Ministry of Railways should also expedite proposals for elevated wildlife crossings or eco-bridges and underpasses for the safe passage of animals.
- A finding of the C&AG was that after the construction of underpasses and overpasses in the areas under the jurisdiction of East Central and Northeast Frontier Railways, there was no death reported.

### **What CAG report suggests for Elephant Train collision?**

- Periodic review of identification of elephant passages.
- More sensitisation programmes for railway staff.
- Standardisation of track signage.
- Installation of an animal detection system (transmitter collars)
- 'Honey bee' sound-emitting devices near all identified elephant passages.

### **Reference**

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/corridors-of-death/article37833915.ece>
2. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/hanging-power-fences-proposed-to-keep-wild-elephants-at-bay/article36567198.ece>