



Union Environment Minister chairs NTCA and Project Elephant Meetings at Sundarbans; Reviews National Strategies for Tiger and Elephant Conservation

Tiger Conservation Plans approved and Expansion of Project Cheetah appraised; Review of Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation and Sixth Cycle of All India Tiger Estimation

Project Elephant Steering Committee Reviews Elephant Estimation, Conflict Management and Reaffirms Commitment to Science-based, Community-centric Conservation Approaches

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 21 DEC 2025 1:50PM by PIB Delhi

The 28th Meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the 22nd Steering Committee Meeting of Project Elephant were held on 21 December 2025 at the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, under the chairmanship of the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav. The meetings brought together senior government officials, scientists, and field experts from tiger and elephant range states, along with representatives of key conservation institutions, to review the progress of Project Tiger and Project Elephant and to deliberate on future strategies for the conservation of tigers and elephants in India.



Chairing the **NTCA meeting**, Shri Yadav emphasized India's globally recognised tiger conservation model and underscored the importance of science-based management, landscape-level planning, community participation, inter-state coordination, and international collaboration.

The minutes of the 27th Meeting held on 18 April 2025 were confirmed and the Action Taken Report on decisions taken therein was reviewed. The outcomes of four Regional Meetings were discussed, with a focus on key challenges faced by tiger reserves. Measures to address human–tiger conflict, including a three-pronged strategy and the launch of the project 'Management of Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves', were highlighted. Issues related to staff shortages, financial constraints, habitat degradation, and invasive species management were also reviewed, with directions issued for appropriate follow-up by States and concerned authorities.

The meeting ratified the decisions of the Technical Committee Meetings of the NTCA, covering approval of Tiger Conservation Plans; extension and expansion of Project Cheetah; tiger translocation; prey augmentation; landscape management planning; carnivore health management training programmes; and inputs provided by the NTCA on project proposals to the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

Updates were presented on compliance with the directions of the 7th National Board for Wildlife pertaining to the NTCA, including the expansion of Project Cheetah to Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary and the Banni Grassland in Gujarat, as well as progress on initiatives supported under CAMPA. Preparatory activities for the proposed Global Big Cat Summit were also reviewed.

The Minister reviewed major ongoing activities of the NTCA, including progress under the sixth cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation, landscape-level training programmes across different regions, commencement of ground surveys from November 2025, and international cooperation under Project Cheetah, including visits by delegations from South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana. The meeting also took note of the Order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and deliberated on its implications for tiger conservation and management.



The **Steering Committee Meeting of Project Elephant** commenced with the confirmation of the Action Taken Report of the 21st Steering Committee Meeting, followed by deliberations on issues raised by Steering Committee Members and Permanent Invitees.

Presentations were made on the status of Regional Action Plans for elephant conservation in Southern India and North-Eastern India, highlighting progress achieved by elephant range states and identifying priority areas for coordinated inter-state action.

The Steering Committee reviewed updates on the **All-India Synchronized Elephant Estimation**, a critical exercise for evidence-based planning and decision-making. Progress under the Model Elephant Conservation Plan for the Nilgiri Elephant Reserve and ongoing work on **DNA profiling of captive elephants** were also discussed, with emphasis on strengthening scientific management and welfare standards.

A comprehensive review of the **status of human–elephant conflict** across the country was undertaken. The Committee discussed findings from ongoing studies on conflict drivers and mitigation measures, along with the status and adequacy of compensation mechanisms adopted by elephant range states.

The meeting also deliberated on the evaluation of elephant population estimation methods, progress on integrated conservation and management strategies for the Ripu–Chirang Elephant Reserve, and future action plans. These include the conduct of Management Effectiveness Evaluation for all Elephant Reserves with CAMPA funding support and a proposed study on elephant corridors, habitat utilisation, and conflict hotspots in the Bandhavgarh region.

The Steering Committee reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to science-based conservation, inter-state coordination, technological innovation, and community-centric approaches to ensure a sustainable future for elephants and the people living in elephant landscapes.

On the occasion, Shri Yadav released six publications. These included **Project Cheetah in India**, highlighting the progress achieved under Project Cheetah through scientific management and international cooperation; the latest issue of **STRIPES**, NTCA's outreach journal, focusing on modern technology, tiger dispersal, and the commencement of the sixth cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE); an **NTCA booklet** documenting India's tiger conservation framework and institutional milestones; **Tigerverse** –

Little-known facts from India's Tiger Reserves, showcasing biodiversity, culture, and conservation stories from tiger reserves across the country; **Best Practices in Captive Elephant Management** for Elephant Handlers and the December 2025 issue of the **TRUMPET** Quarterly Journal.





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