

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS
INDIA

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MOST URGENT

Shri Bhupender Yadav
Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Government of India
Indira Paryavaran Bhavan, Jor Bagh Road
New Delhi – 110003

Via post and email: mefcc@gov.in, ps2mefcc@gov.in

26th May 2026

Subject: Urgent policy intervention sought to prohibit close-contact captive elephant interactions and promote ethical, observation-based elephant tourism

Dear Hon'ble Minister,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals India (PETA India) and our more than 2 million members and supporters, regarding a series of grave incidents involving captive elephants attacking tourists and other people. Most recently, a tourist and an elephant died at the Dubare Elephant Camp in Karnataka following a fight between elephants during a bathing session with the tourists. **A mother was crushed to death after being caught between two elephants** as they charged and collided, while her husband, holding their young child, was helpless to save her (**Annexure-1**). On 29th April 2026, it was reported that **a captive elephant fatally attacked a mahout at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve** in Uttar Pradesh despite apparently showing no prior signs of aggression (**Annexure - 2**).

At Rajasthan's Amer Fort, one of the country's most prominent tourist sites where elephants are used for rides, elephants have repeatedly fought with one another, attacked tourists, and created panic in confined pathways where visitors have little chance of escape. The extent of risk to human life and suffering from such incidents is undeniable.

In May 2024, video footage of an elephant pushing another elephant while carrying tourists at Amer Fort was released by PETA India. In February 2024, **elephant Gouri wrapped a Russian tourist in her trunk and swung her to the ground, breaking her leg**. Before that, in October 2022, the same **elephant attacked a local shopkeeper just outside the Amer Fort hospitalising him**. In 2019, a brawl occurred between two elephants while they were both carrying tourists. In fact, elephants used for rides at Rajasthan's Amer Fort have repeatedly attacked tourists. A detailed factsheet on the elephant attacks in Amer, Rajasthan, can be found as **Annexure-3**.

It is pertinent to highlight that in June 2017, tourists visiting Amer Fort near Jaipur witnessed and documented **a group of handlers attacking an elephant called Malti**. The tourists watched in horror as eight men, including the mahout, beat the elephant with sticks. Malti has since been rescued and is now being rehabilitated.

Entities:

- PETA US
- PETA Asia
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (UK)

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Elephants used for rides, safaris, processions, and similar activities are typically controlled through pain, weapon use, and prolonged chaining. That means, **captive elephants are forced to appear docile, but remain highly unpredictable and dangerous**. When elephants attack humans, beatings and other punishments typically follow, which only make the animals more frustrated and upset. These attacks by captive elephants on humans are, therefore, predictable consequences of forcing highly intelligent, wild animals into stressful, unnatural interactions with the public. According to the Heritage Animal Task Force, captive elephants killed 526 people in Kerala alone over a span of 15 years.

The world is now rejecting dangerous cruelty to animals disguised as “safe” tourist activities. **84% of people interviewed in a 2022 global World Animal Protection poll believed that tour operators should not sell activities that cause wild animal suffering**. 79% of people polled, said they would prefer to see animals in the wild than in captivity if they had the chance. Responding to public sentiment, Tripadvisor – the largest travel website in the world – announced that it would no longer sell tickets to animal “attractions”, including elephant rides, that put wild and endangered animals, as well as travellers, in danger. In fact, **more than 250 travel companies have pledged not to include elephant rides and shows in their itineraries**.

The inherent risk of harm to human life and serious concerns on elephant welfare underscore the urgent need to immediately prohibit tourist activities at elephant camps, safari parks, and establishments such as Hathi Gaon, Chokhi Dhani, and similar venues, where captive elephants are routinely used for rides, feeding, painting, bathing, photography, and other forms of direct human interaction.

Instead, **lifelike mechanical elephants—capable of movement of eyes, ears, tail and trunk and which can be moved on a wheeled base—provide a humane, safe, and practical alternative to the use of live elephants**. Dozens of temples across India already use these mechanical marvels for processions and the Kerala Tourism department has introduced a mechanical elephant safari at Thamboormuzhi Butterfly park in Kerala. These mechanical elephants show that tourism can remain exciting, immersive, and memorable without the use of live elephants.

More about mechanical elephants can be found here as **Annexure-4**. A video of mechanical elephants donated to ISCKON Navi Mumbai can be accessed <https://shorturl.at/aRdJm>.

In a move toward modern, non-exploitative wildlife tourism, **the Indonesian government has banned elephant rides nationwide**. In 2023, **the United Kingdom passed the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act, creating a framework to stop UK companies from selling or advertising overseas animal attractions—**such as elephant rides—that involve cruelty.

PETA India’s representation vide letter dated 27 March 2026 (**Annexure-5**) also requested your good office for an immediate directive prohibiting the use of elephants for tourist rides across all states and union territories and to facilitate a transition to ethical, observation-based tourism focused exclusively on free-ranging elephants in the wild. The recent deaths have further underscored the urgent need to end close-contact captive elephant tourism and now warrants your urgent attention for a nationwide directive.

We, therefore, urgently request that you take the necessary steps to direct all State Governments and Union Territories to prohibit elephant rides, bathing

experiences and other close-contact activities that endanger both human and elephant lives.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this critical issue. I would be happy to assist your office in this matter in any reasonable manner. I can be reached at KhushbooG@petaindia.org or 9910397382. May I learn of any action taken in this regard?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khushboo Gupta', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Khushboo Gupta
Vice President of Policy

Dubare jumbo fight: Elephant Marthanda dies a day after fatal clash

Elephant Kanjan barred from future Dasara jumbo duty in Mysuru

Updated - May 20, 2026 10:05 am IST - MYSURU

THE HINDU BUREAU



Elephants Kanjan and Marthanda fight during a bathing session at the Dubare Elephant Camp in Kodagu, which led to the tragic death of a woman tourist from Tamil Nadu on May 18, 2026. | Photo Credit: PTI

A day after a **fierce clash between captive elephants Kanjan and Marthanda** at the Dubare Elephant Camp in Kodagu district, that claimed the life of a woman tourist from Chennai who was caught in the tussle in the Cauvery river, Marthanda (53), who had sustained serious injuries in the attack, succumbed on Tuesday (May 19).

The elephant's death cast a pall of gloom over mahouts, kavadis and forest personnel at the popular elephant camp.

Kodagu district in-charge Minister N.S. Boseraju expressed grief over the death of the tourist from Tamil Nadu in the incident. Describing it as an unforeseen tragedy, he said such incidents should not recur in future and directed the district administration to take necessary preventive measures.

Mr. Boseraju also mourned the death of Marthanda. "The elephant had suffered severe injuries in the fight and was battling for life. However, it breathed its last on Tuesday morning," he said.

The Minister announced that a compensation of ₹20 lakh would be provided to the victim's family by the Forest Department.

Meanwhile, Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B. Khandre expressed deep sorrow over the death of Marthanda and termed the incident "unexpected and unimaginable".

"The deaths of a woman tourist and an elephant in the mishap are deeply tragic," he said in a statement.

Marthanda, a 53-year-old makna elephant weighing around 4,500 kg, had been captured in Alur taluk of Hassan district in 2023. **Kanjan**, a 26-year-old elephant captured near Yeslur in Hassan district in 2014, had participated in the Mysuru Dasara festivities on three occasions.

No Dasara duty for Kanjan

In the aftermath of the incident, Mr. Khandre directed the Forest Department not to use Kanjan for future Mysuru Dasara celebrations.

The incident at the Dubare Elephant Camp has triggered concern over visitor safety at elephant camps following the tragic incident during the elephants' bathing session on May 18.

In the wake of the tragedy, the State government has **initiated a review of safety protocols** at elephant camps and is considering stricter regulations for tourists visiting such facilities.

Published - May 19, 2026 02:12 pm IST

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/dubare-jumbo-fight-elephant-marthanda-dies-a-day-after-fatal-clash/article70997209.ece>

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/no-clear-trigger-in-recent-dudhwa-elephant-attack-101777659970739.html>

No clear trigger in recent Dudhwa elephant attack

A camp elephant at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve fatally attacked its handler, raising concerns as no clear cause for the aggression has been identified.

Published on: May 02, 2026 4:34 AM IST

By [HT Correspondent](#), Lakhimpur Kheri

A day after a camp elephant at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve fatally attacked its handler, forest officials and wildlife experts are still searching for answers, with no clear trigger in sight.



The elephant was neither in 'musth' nor was there any sign of aggression observed in him earlier. (FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSE ONLY)

Vinayak, a 13-year-old elephant, had on Wednesday suddenly charged at his handler, Ram Vilas, while being led for a routine bath after patrolling in the rhino area of the south Sonaripur range. The handler later succumbed to his injuries.

What has unsettled authorities is the absence of any obvious cause. Officials said the elephant was neither in musth (heat) nor had it shown prior signs of aggression. Soon after the attack, Vinayak was reported to

have returned to a calm state, deepening the mystery around the sudden outburst.

The elephant was neither in 'musth' nor was there any sign of aggression observed in him earlier, field director H. Rajamohan told HT on Wednesday.

"It is unusual, but not entirely inexplicable," said Ramesh Pandey, additional director general (Wildlife). He noted that even well-acquainted captive elephants can turn aggressive under stress or due to subtle behavioural triggers that may not be immediately visible.

Echoing this, Aritra Kshetry of WWF-India stressed the need for detailed behavioural profiling of camp elephants. "Like humans, elephants have individual temperaments. Tracking patterns --past aggression, stress signals, interactions--can help anticipate risks," he said.

Forest officials have since isolated Vinayak and placed him under observation. The department is now examining his behavioural history and working conditions to identify any overlooked stress factors.

The incident has prompted calls within the department to strengthen safety protocols for handlers and maintain systematic behavioural records of captive elephants, an effort experts say could help prevent 'such rare' but fatal episodes.



- Dudhwa Tiger Reserve

Dangerous Incidents Involving Elephants Used by Amer Fort

The following incidents highlight the dangers of placing frustrated and upset wild animals in close contact with humans.

1. December 2025: While two elephants named Dilruba and Chanchali were fighting at the Amer Fort exit, [Chanchali fell on a passerby, causing severe injuries](#).

2. October 2024: An elephant named Bonmala died following a fight with another elephant named Pinki within the Hathī Gaon premises at Amer.

3. March 2024: An elephant returning from giving rides to tourists dangerously pushed another elephant, who was still carrying tourists, against a wall several times. [The incident was captured on CCTV at Amer Fort](#).

4. February 2024: As reported in [Dainik Bhaskar](#), a female elephant (referred to as “number 86”) attacked a Russian tourist in the main courtyard of Amer Fort. CCTV footage shows the elephant grabbing the woman in her trunk, swinging her vigorously, then slamming her to the ground. The tourist’s leg was broken, and the mahout fell from the elephant’s back.

5. October 2022: As reported in *The Times of India*, a female [elephant attacked a 45-year-old man](#), a local shopkeeper. Elephant called “number 86” was being taken to Amer Fort to be used for rides when she caught the man by her trunk, causing instant bleeding from his ears. As people tried to rescue him, the elephant threw him into the road, leading to fractured ribs and severe injuries to his head, ears, and legs.

6. July 2022: Apparently triggered by a tourist’s attempt to take a selfie, an [elephant named Muskan attacked a 10-year-old child with her trunk and kicked the adult accompanying the child](#), according to *Hindustan Samachar*.

7. March 2019: Two female elephants (referred to as “number 44” and “number 74”) carrying tourists on their backs at Amer Fort started fighting with each other. The mahouts (elephant handlers) could not control them, which caused panic among the tourists. *The Times of India* reported, [“Elephants carrying tourists to Amer \[Fort\] fighting with each other is not new.”](#)

8. July 2017: An elephant called “number 44”, who was not adequately fed, reached for a banana and attacked another

elephant. Although the mahouts were cited for mercilessly beating her, she was forced to return to carrying tourists. *The Times of India* reported on this incident in an article titled [“Cruelty to Elephant: Show-Cause Notice Issued”](#).

9. May 2014: When an elephant who was chained in the heat became upset, he used his trunk to grab and throw a mahout off his back and onto the ground. He then ran into a wall and fell onto the mahout, killing him. *The Times of India* wrote on this, [“Male elephants have been banned from rides when tourists come to \[Amer Fort\] after several incidents of pachyderms going berserk during summers were reported.”](#)

10. February 2011: Two South Korean tourists were critically injured when the elephant they were riding clashed with another one. The terrified couple jumped off the elephant’s back, sustaining broken bones and head injuries. *Deccan Herald* reported, [“There have \[been\] a number of similar incidents \[at Amer Fort\] when elephants went berserk and even killed people.”](#)

11. April 2010: A 45-year-old elephant who was under treatment for paralysis but was still expected to carry tourists collapsed and died after taking just a few steps while trying to navigate a ramp. Her body had to be cut into pieces for removal from the passage. *The Times of India* reported this incident in an article titled [“Elephant Dies at Amber, Second in Four Months”](#).

12. August 2009: An elephant became distressed while carrying tourists, so the mahout and tourists jumped off her. Two mahouts who tried controlling her sustained severe head injuries. She damaged a building as she tried to escape but was captured, tranquilised, and chained up again. Her ordeal was captured [on video](#).

13. August 2009: *The Times of India* reported that a [25-year-old elephant strayed from her regular route while carrying tourists](#) and ran off to some nearby hills. She died “under mysterious circumstances”, although eyewitnesses reported that her death was caused by injuries and an overdose of tranquilisers.

14. September 2005: Provoked by the flash of a camera, an elephant lifted a guide with his trunk and crushed him under his feet. Two tourists were sent to the hospital with severe injuries. [Elephant rides were banned briefly](#) at Amer Fort after this incident, as reported by *Hindustan Times*.

15. 2003: The *Deccan Herald* reported that an angry elephant [pulled a young man off his or her back and crushed him to death](#).

16. 1999: [A mahout was trampled by an elephant](#) when he tried to stop the animal from entering a lake near Amer Fort, as reported in *Deccan Herald*.

News reports: Mechanical elephants at the temples in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh



What Is A Mechanical Elephant Or 'Thaleeswaran' That Jackie Shroff & PETA India Donated To Kerala Temple?

Source: [What Is A Mechanical Elephant Or 'Thaleeswaran' That Jackie Shroff & PETA India Donated To Kerala Temple?](#)

Bollywood veteran Jackie Shroff has partnered with PETA India to donate a life-size mechanical elephant to the Nedyathali Sri Siva Temple in Kodungallur, near Thrissur, Kerala. The initiative, described as “a jumbo stride in kindness,” aims to preserve cultural traditions while protecting elephants from captivity.

Speaking about the move, Shroff said his heart lights up when he sees “God’s creations living happily.” He added, “Elephants are not meant to be chained or forced to perform rituals. God created them to roam in forests, splash in rivers, and live free.”

What is a mechanical elephant?

A mechanical elephant is a life-size robotic model designed to look, move, and function like a real elephant. Built using rubber, fibre, steel, mesh, foam, and motors, these robotic jumbos replicate natural elephant behaviour without causing harm to animals. The donated elephant, named ‘Thaleeswaran’, is:

1. 3 metres tall and 800 kilograms heavy
2. Powered by five motors
3. Capable of shaking its head, moving ears and eyes, lifting its trunk, wagging its tail, and even spraying water
4. Mounted on a wheelbase, making it mobile for temple processions
5. Operated simply by plugging it into an electrical source

It can also carry a seat on its back for ceremonial rides, just like a real elephant, but without any cruelty.

Why it matters?

For decades, Kerala's cultural festivals have featured elephants in rituals and parades. But behind the grandeur lies a harsh reality, captive elephants often endure chains, long working hours, and isolation from their herds. Animal rights activists have repeatedly highlighted the stress and cruelty these creatures face in captivity.

Mechanical elephants provide a cruelty-free solution, allowing temples to uphold customs while promoting kindness to animals.

Thaleeswaran is the 11th mechanical elephant donated by PETA India and the seventh in Kerala. Each has been warmly welcomed, showing a shift towards sustainable and compassionate temple practices.



Actress Shilpa Shetty donates mechanical elephant to Jagadguru Renukacharya Temple in Karnataka

Read more at: <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/actress-shilpa-shetty-donates-mechanical-elephant-to-jagadguru-renukacharya-temple-in-karnataka-3318669>

Launching the mechanical elephant called Veerabhadra, Karnataka Minister Eshwar B Khandre said that technology has made it possible for temples to have elephants without having to keep them in shackles.



Actor Shilpa Shetty. Credit: PTI Photo

Chikkamagaluru: Actress Shilpa Shetty on Sunday donated a life-size mechanical elephant to Shri Jagadguru Renukacharya Temple here to celebrate the centenary birth ceremony of Shrimad Rambhaphuri Veerarudramuni Jagadguru.

Launching the mechanical elephant called Veerabhadra, Karnataka Minister Eshwar B Khandre said that technology has made it possible for temples to have elephants without having to keep them in shackles.

Shri Jagadguru Renukacharya Temple at the Rambhपुरi Peetha has decided never to own or hire live elephants.

Lauding the temple's decision, Khandre, who holds the portfolios of Forest, Ecology and Environment said, "Many other temples and maths have requested me to donate an elephant. But as per the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, we cannot donate elephants to any other temple. Under these circumstances, new technologies have come, like the robotic elephant." The elephant donation to the temple was facilitated by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India and Bengaluru-based animal welfare NGO, Compassionate Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA).

According to PETA India, the three-meter-tall mechanical elephant weighs 800 kg and is made of rubber, fibre, metal, mesh, foam, and steel, and runs on five motors.

The forest minister thanked PETA, CUPA and the actress on behalf of the forest department and Karnataka government.

"It's the need of the hour, and they (elephants) have a right to live on this Earth." Karnataka Energy Minister K J George and Member of the Legislative Assembly of Sringeri, T D Rajegowda were present.

Shri Jagadguru Renukacharya Temple is the first shrine in Chikkamagaluru district to have this technology.

Veerabhadra will be used to conduct cruelty-free ceremonies at the temple, helping real elephants stay with their herd in the jungle.

Appreciating the efforts of PETA India and CUPA in donating mechanical elephants to temples, chief swami of the Peetha, Rambhपुरi Jagadguru, said, "We encourage more temples and maths to join us by welcoming a mechanical elephant." According to PETA, most elephants held captive in temples and other places suffer from excruciating foot problems and leg wounds due to chaining to concrete for hours on end and many become frustrated and lash out, sometimes killing mahouts or other humans or animals.

Quoting figures from the Heritage Animal Task Force's report, PETA said captive elephants killed 526 people in Kerala in a 15-year period.

PETA India had also facilitated the donation of a mechanical elephant to Irinjadappilly Sri Krishna Temple in Thrissur, Kerala, with the help of actor Parvathy Thiruvothu.

According to PETA India, now, at least 10 mechanical elephants are used in temples across south India, of which it has donated six.

ISKCON temple gifted a mechanical elephant by Hema Malini and PETA India

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/125204652.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=te xt&utm_campaign=cppst

Nov 10, 2025, 05.01 PM IST



Printed from Navi Mumbai: Actor and member of parliament, Hema Malini, in association with PETA India, gifted a life-size mechanical elephant to ISKCON temple at Kharghar, making it the first religious institution in Maharashtra to be given a mechanical elephant. This is to discourage the exploitation of real elephants which are often kept captive in poor conditions.

The President of ISKCON Kharghar, Shri Sura Das, said: "In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna teaches us to see all living beings with equal vision. Protecting animals—dear to Lord Krishna and Lord Ganesha—is our dharma." He added, "A mechanical elephant allows us to honour our traditions while upholding the principle of ahimsa (non-violence). By embracing a mechanical elephant, we align with Krishna's teachings of love, devotion, and care for all creatures."

The founder Acharya of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada taught that animals have souls and are God's creatures deserving compassion, with similarities to humans in their basic needs like eating, sleeping, and defending themselves. He considered killing animals for food to be a form of violence, arguing that a truly spiritual civilization would protect animals and allow them to live natural lives, while cow protection was especially vital for a Vedic culture.

The mechanical marvel that will be used to conduct ceremonies at ISKCON Kharghar in a safe and cruelty-free manner, helping real elephants stay with their families in their jungle homes.

The initiative was facilitated by PETA India in recognition of ISKCON Kharghar's decision to never own or hire live elephants. The mechanical elephant was welcomed through an inauguration ceremony, and ISKCON Kharghar hosted a kirtan performance.

Hema Malini is well-known for her efforts to protect animals. "As a longtime devotee of Lord Krishna, a proud member of ISKCON, and an animal lover, I am honoured to join PETA India in gifting ISKCON Kharghar a mechanical elephant," said Malini and added, "This modern approach allows us to continue age-old traditions while ensuring real elephants remain in jungles with their families as God intended."

PETA India's Vice President of Celebrity and Public Relations, Sachin Bangera, said, "Hinduism teaches us compassion for animals. Mechanical elephant Gajendra is an expression of our values of ahimsa and reverence for all life."

MLA from Panvel Prashant Thakur said: "It is a proud moment for Navi Mumbai that Asia's second-largest ISKCON temple at Kharghar is setting an example for the world by combining tradition with modernity and compassion. By adopting a mechanical elephant, the temple is showing how faith and technology can go together to protect animals and continue our culture."



न चारा खाएगा, न जंजीर में बंधेगा, कानपुर इस्कॉन मंदिर पहुंचा एक्ट्रेस श्रिया सरन का 'स्पेशल' गजराज

<https://www.jagran.com/uttar-pradesh/kanpur-city-south-star-shriya-saran-special-mechanical-elephant-arrives-at-kanpur-iskcon-40224743.html>

BY DIGITAL DESK EDITED BY: ANURAG SHUKLA UPDATED: FRI, 01 MAY 2026 03:29 PM (IST)

पेटा इंडिया और अभिनेत्री श्रिया सरन ने कानपुर के इस्कॉन मंदिर को उत्तर भारत का पहला मशीनी हाथी 'गजराज' भेंट किया है। यह पहल धार्मिक आयोजनों में जीवित हाथियों के उपयोग को समाप्त कर पशु कल्याण को बढ़ावा देने के उद्देश्य से की गई है।



इस्कान मंदिर परिसर में खड़ा गजराज। जागरण

जागरण संवाददाता, कानपुर। सामाजिक पशु हाथी जंगल में अपने परिवार के साथ खुशनुमा जीवन जी सकता है। अगर हाथी जैसे विशाल पशु को अपने मतलब के लिए बांधा या कैद किया जाता है तो ये उन बेजुबान के साथ होने वाली नाइंसाफी है। इस बात पर जोर देते हुए पीपल फार द एथिकल ट्रीटमेंट आफ एनिमल्स इंडिया (पेटा) ने मशीनी हाथी उन जगहों पर भेजने का सोचा जहां-जहां हाथियों की जरूरत लोगों को पड़ती है। इसमें धार्मिक संस्थान, सर्कस और विभिन्न जगहें सम्मिलित हैं। उत्तर भारत को पहला मशीनी हाथी उत्तर प्रदेश के कानपुर नगर में स्थित इस्कॉन मंदिर को पेटा इंडिया और साउथ एक्ट्रेस श्रिया सरन की ओर से भेंट किया गया है।

पेटा ऐसी संस्था है जो जानवरों की सुरक्षा के लिए कई बड़े कदम उठा चुकी है। अब हाथियों को जंगल में आजाद छोड़ने के लिए मशीनी हाथी का उपयोग किया जा रहा है। उत्तर भारत में पहला मशीनी हाथी देने में श्रिया सरन ने सहयोग दिया और कानपुर में मशीनी हाथी के उद्घाटन समारोह में कानपुर इस्कॉनमंदिर के लिए एक संदेश भी भेजा है।

कैसे बना है मशीनी हाथी?

रबर, फाइबर, धातु, जाली, फोम, स्टील से बना यह मशीनी हाथी 3 मीटर ऊंचे और 500 किलोग्राम का होता है। यह मशीनी हाथी बिल्कुल असली हाथी जैसा दिखता है जो सिर हिलाता है, कान और आंखें चलाता है, पूंछ हिलाता है, सूंढ उठाकर पानी का छिड़काव भी करता है। पैरों में पहिए लगाने की वजह से हाथी इधर से उधर ले जाया सकता है। मशीनी हाथी पर एक सीट लगाकर उसकी सवारी भी की जा सकती है। इस हाथी को बिजली से जोड़कर आसानी से चलाया जा सकता है। पेटा इंडिया के मुताबिक, पशु हमारे मनोरंजन का साधन नहीं हैं, इसलिए उन्हें वहां रहने दिया जाए जहां वे सुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं। बाकी अगर हमारी जरूरतें हैं तो उनकी जगह कुछ ऐसी चीजों का विकल्प सोचा जा सकता है और ऐसे ही मशीनी हाथी विकल्प है।

श्रिया सरन ने दिया कानपुर इस्कॉन मंदिर को संदेश

साउथ इंडियन सिनेमा की फेमस एक्ट्रेस श्रिया सरन ने कानपुर इस्कॉन मंदिर के नाम एक संदेश भी भेजा। उन्होंने कहा, 'मुझे पेटा इंडिया के साथ मिलकर इस्कॉन कानपुर को गजराज भेंट करते हुए बहुत खुशी हो रही है। यह मशीनी हाथी मंदिर को पुरानी परंपराओं को जारी रखने में मदद करेगा, साथ ही हाथियों को जो भगवान गणेश के पृथ्वी पर प्रतिनिधि हैं, उनके प्राकृतिक आवास में फलने-फूलने का अवसर देगा। यह पहल मेरे लिए विशेष महत्व रखती है, क्योंकि यह उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य का पहला मशीनी हाथी होगा।'

कैसे बना है मशीनी हाथी? रबर, फाइबर, धातु, जाली, फोम, स्टील से बना यह मशीनी हाथी 3 मीटर ऊंचे और 500 किग्रा का होता है। यह मशीनी हाथी बिल्कुल असली हाथी जैसा दिखता है जो सिर हिलाता है, कान और आंखें चलाता है, पूंछ हिलाता है, सूंढ उठाकर पानी का छिड़काव भी करता है। पैरों में पहिए लगाने की वजह से हाथी इधर से उधर ले जाया सकता है। मशीनी हाथी पर एक सीट लगाकर उसकी सवारी भी की जा सकती है। इस हाथी को बिजली से जोड़कर आसानी से चलाया जा सकता है।

पेटा इंडिया के मुताबिक, पशु हमारे मनोरंजन का साधन नहीं हैं, इसलिए उन्हें वहां रहने दिया जाए जहां वे सुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं। बाकी अगर हमारी जरूरतें हैं तो उनकी जगह कुछ ऐसी चीजों का विकल्प सोचा जा सकता है और ऐसे ही मशीनी हाथी विकल्प है।

श्रिया सरन ने दिया कानपुर इस्कॉन मंदिर को संदेश

साउथ इंडियन सिनेमा की फेमस एक्ट्रेस श्रिया सरन ने कानपुर इस्कॉन मंदिर के नाम एक संदेश भी भेजा। उन्होंने कहा, 'मुझे पेटा इंडिया के साथ मिलकर इस्कॉन कानपुर को गजराज भेंट करते हुए बहुत खुशी हो रही है। यह मशीनी हाथी मंदिर को पुरानी परंपराओं को जारी रखने में मदद करेगा, साथ ही हाथियों को जो भगवान गणेश के पृथ्वी पर प्रतिनिधि हैं, उनके प्राकृतिक आवास में फलने-फूलने का अवसर देगा। यह पहल मेरे लिए विशेष महत्व रखती है, क्योंकि यह उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य का पहला मशीनी हाथी होगा।'

इस्कॉन कानपुर के अध्यक्ष प्रेम हरिनाम प्रभु ने कहा, 'भगवद् गीता में श्रीकृष्ण कहते हैं कि सच्चा भक्त सभी जीवित प्राणियों का दयालु मित्र होता है। सच्ची भक्ति करुणा के बिना संभव नहीं है। यह पहल हमें हमारे मंदिर की शोभायात्राओं की आध्यात्मिक भव्यता को बनाए रखने की अनुमति देती है, साथ ही यह सुनिश्चित करती है कि किसी भी जीवित प्राणी को तनाव या कैद का सामना ना करना पड़े।'

30 अप्रैल को शहर के मैनावती मार्ग पर स्थित इस्कॉन मंदिर में मशीनी हाथी के उद्घाटन में पेटा इंडिया के उज्ज्वल ने कहा, 'अपने स्वार्थ और कमाई के लिए लोग जानवरों का इस्तेमाल विभिन्न चीजों में करते हैं। यह बहुत दुख की बात है कि उन्हें बेजुबान का दर्द दिखाई नहीं देता। इसलिए पेटा से जितना हो सकेगा पशुओं पर होने वाले अत्याचारों को इसी तरह विकल्प देते हुए रोकेगे। फिलहाल हाथियों पर शोभायात्रा निकालने वालों के लिए हमने मशीनी हाथी का विकल्प निकाला है, एक्ट्रेस श्रिया सरन के सहयोग ने हमने उत्तर भारत का पहला मशीनी हाथी कानपुर इस्कॉन मंदिर को भेंट किया और मैं इस्कॉनका आभारी हूं कि उन्होंने हमारा यह विकल्प अपनाया है।'

Annexure 5: Previously submitted letter with annexures

सभी जानवरों के अधिकारों की रक्षा हेतु समर्पित एक राष्ट्रीय संस्था
A NATIONAL ORGANISATION DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

PETA INDIA

MOST URGENT

Shri Bhupender Yadav
Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Government of India
Indira Paryavaran Bhavan, Jor Bagh Road
New Delhi – 110003

Via Email and post

Email: mefcc@gov.in, ps2mefcc@gov.in

27th March 2026

Subject: Urgent request for a nationwide prohibition on elephant rides as Indonesia has done for elephant and tourist welfare.

Respected Hon'ble Minister,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals India (PETA India) and our more than 2 million members and supporters to urgently draw your kind attention to the pressing need for a prohibition on the use of captive elephants for rides across India and to guide a transition to ethical and conservation-focused experiences of observing wild elephants in their natural habitats. This request comes at a critical juncture, as countries around the world are re-evaluating and rejecting exploitative wildlife-tourism. Indonesia recently issued a binding nationwide directive banning elephant rides across the country, requiring operators to shift entirely to observation-only experiences involving free-ranging elephants, without captivity, physical interaction, or direct contact (**Annexure 1**).

The Indonesian government has framed this shift as a move toward ethical and modern, non-exploitive wildlife tourism. This is an important example that shows that protecting elephants and promoting tourism can go hand in hand, and the venues that once offered elephant rides have already begun transitioning to educational, welfare-centered tourism. In 2023, the United Kingdom passed the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act, creating a framework to stop UK companies from selling or advertising overseas animal attractions—such as elephant rides—that involve cruelty.

Global public opinion strongly supports ending elephant rides. A 2022 international poll found that 84% of respondents believe tour operators should not sell activities that cause wild animal suffering. According to World Animal Protection, more than 220 travel companies—including major operators such as The Travel Corporation, G Adventures, and Intrepid Travel—have pledged to stop selling elephant rides and shows. This global shift reflects the growing recognition that any use of captive elephants for tourism causes suffering. India, therefore, can only gain from ending the use of elephants for rides once and for all.

Elephants have long held special status in India. In a joint statement with the then—UK prime minister during the UK-India Summit 2015, our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji committed to improving protection for wild and captive elephants.

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Elephants are classified as **Schedule I** animals under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972, granting them the highest level of legal protection. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified elephants as **endangered on its Red List**. Elephants were declared India's National Heritage Animal in 2010, reflecting their deep cultural and ecological significance. As a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India is bound by SDG 15 (Life on Land), which calls for the protection of endangered species and the prevention of biodiversity loss. Despite these protections, elephants continue to be exploited for tourist rides.

With wild elephant numbers down by 18% and only at 22,446 in India – these beautiful animals require our immediate attention. Prohibiting their use in tourism rides will help more elephant families stay together in their jungle homes, prevent cruelty, reduce zoonotic disease risks since elephants are common carriers of tuberculosis, and uphold India's international commitments to wildlife protection.

Elephants used for rides such as at Rajasthan's Amer Fort and Hathigaon and at various forest camps in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala endure chronic and severe physical and psychological distress. Before their use, they are torn apart from their mothers at a young age and beaten into submission. They are then controlled with sharp, hooked *ankush* weapons, chained for long hours, and forced to stand on hard concrete floors that cause painful foot and musculoskeletal problems like arthritis. Such elephants commonly suffer from untreated wounds, infections, and deep psychological trauma and upset captive elephants routinely attack their mahouts, tourists and other humans around them. According to the Heritage Animal Task Force, captive elephants killed 526 people in Kerala in a 15-year period.

Inspections by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Project Elephant Committee (2020), and the Animal Welfare Board of India (2018) reports have documented mutilation, visual impairment, spiked-chain injuries, and illegal practices among elephants used for rides at Amer Fort. And an inspection report from the committee constituted by the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, per a 6th March, 2020 order of the Supreme Court of India, sought to phase out elephant rides by replacing them with electric or battery-operated vehicles at Amer Fort, citing aging elephants and tourists' declining preference for elephant rides.

For all of these reasons, a central directive is necessary to ensure uniform, welfare-based, non-contact practices nationwide and a specific prohibition against elephant rides like in Indonesia. India has a valuable opportunity to now lead the way. As home to the declining numbers of Asian elephants and as a nation that has declared the elephant our National Heritage Animal, India can set a new standard by replacing rides with strictly non-contact, wild-elephant observation in natural ecosystems only. Indonesia's example shows how facilities and tourist economy that once offered rides can successfully transition.

Proven alternatives, including electric vehicles, ropeways, guided walking routes, and wildlife viewing that does not involve captivity or confinement, are already operating

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successfully worldwide, ensuring that tourism continues to thrive without exploiting elephants.

And now, the Kerala Tourism Department has recently introduced tourist rides on a life-like mechanical elephant at the Kerala Tourism department-managed famous Thumbboormuzhi Butterfly Garden, near the iconic Athirapilly waterfalls - the largest waterfall in Kerala. This spectacular attraction shows that tourism can remain exciting, immersive, and memorable without the use of live elephants. Instead, it offers visitors a grand and realistic experience that celebrates Kerala's cultural heritage while promoting genuine respect and compassion for elephants.

In view of the foregoing, we respectfully urge your good office to issue an immediate directive prohibiting the use of elephants for tourist rides across all states and union territories and facilitate a transition to ethical, observation-based tourism focused exclusively on free-ranging elephants in the wild that upholds India's commitment to compassion, scientific understanding, and ethical wildlife management. Such a decisive stance would send an unequivocal message of India's respect for its wildlife and set India's position on the global ethical tourism landscape.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I would be happy to assist your office in this matter in any reasonable manner. I can be reached at vchandravanshi@petaindia.org or 7428395762. May I learn of any action taken in this regard?

Yours sincerely,



Vikram Chandravanshi
Senior Policy and Legal Advisor
PETA INDIA

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NEXTSHARK

Indonesia bans elephant riding in landmark moment for animal welfare

Carl Samson

Wed, 25 February 2026 at 10:23 pm GMT+5:30 · 2 min read

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[\[Source\]](#)

Indonesia has formally prohibited elephant riding across the country, issuing one of the most sweeping bans of its kind in Southeast Asia.

A win for animal rights: In an order issued late 2025, the country's Ministry of Forestry [directed](#) conservation and tourist facilities to replace elephant rides

with observation-based, ethical encounters. Venues that fail to comply risk having their operating permits revoked. The directive came after years of campaigning and undercover probing, including from PETA Asia whose investigators [found](#) elephants with open wounds and permanent scars, staff wielding bullhooks to force them into giving rides and at least one infant locked in a dark, off-limits enclosure.

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Compliance in Bali was notably [swift](#). Bali Zoo ended its elephant ride program on Jan. 1, 2026, and Mason Elephant Park, which houses 27 critically endangered Sumatran elephants, ended rides on Jan. 25 after receiving official warnings.

Why this matters: Unlike voluntary industry commitments, the ban is backed by genuine enforcement power. It also proves financially sustainable in Southeast Asia, where some venues have moved to observation-based programs years ago. Beyond economics, the decision carries particular symbolic weight as Indonesia is home to the critically endangered Sumatran elephant, making strong welfare protections especially consequential. More broadly, millions of international tourists pass through Bali each year, a scale that gives any policy shift the potential to reshape traveler expectations across the wider region.

Trending on NextShark: [Indonesia bans elephant riding in landmark moment for animal welfare](#)

Despite the progress, PETA cautions that some facilities continue to disguise [exploitative practices](#) behind labels like “sanctuary” or “conservation,” and that the broader work of reform is far from over.

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This story is part of The Rebel Yellow Newsletter — a bold weekly newsletter from the creators of NextShark, reclaiming our stories and celebrating Asian American voices.