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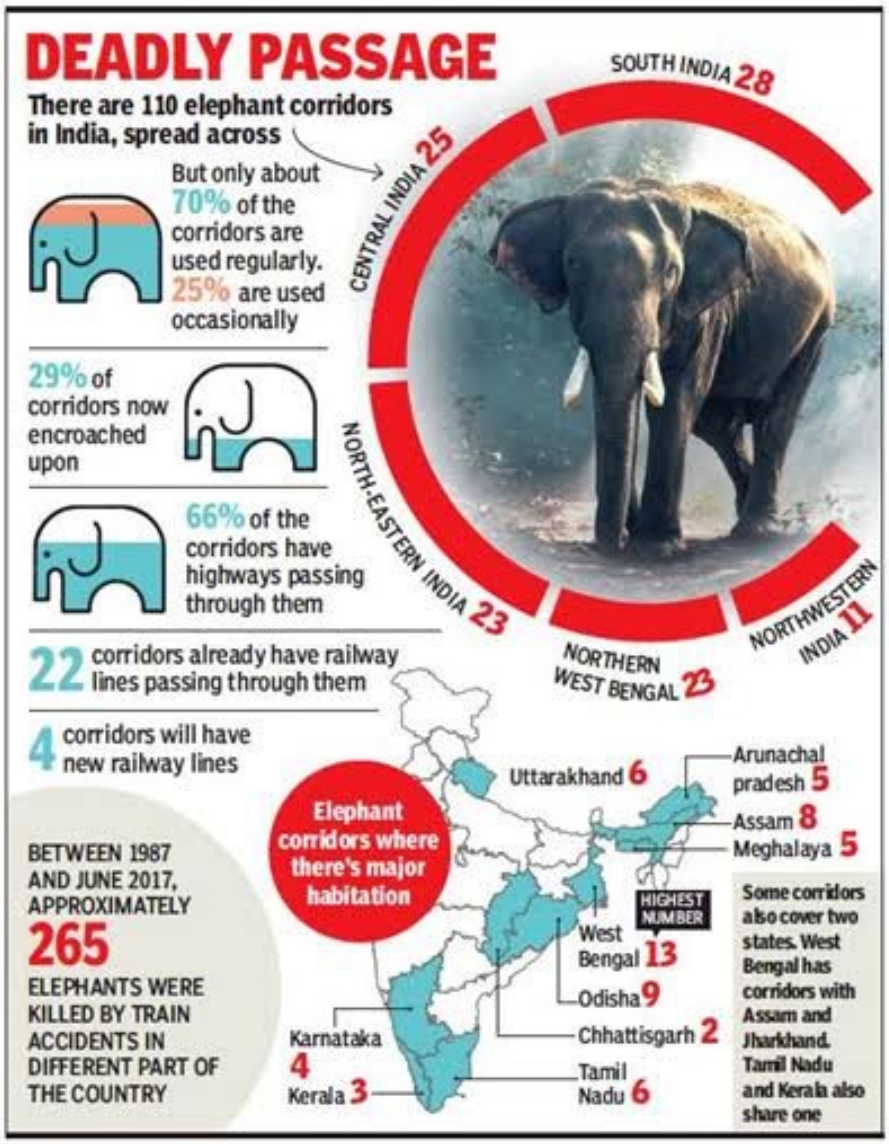
# Kerala’s Man-Elephant Conflict

## Why in news?

The Kerala forest department captured a rogue tusker (PT 7 or Palakkad Tusker 7) that had been raiding villages in Palakkad district for over a year.

## What is the scale of human-elephant conflict in the state?

- Of the estimated nationwide population of 30,000 wild elephants in 2017, Kerala had about 5,700, or **19%** of the total population.
- Kerala recorded only **5.6%** population that India lost to electrocution and poaching between 2018-19 and 2020-21.
- Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, Kerala accounted for only **4%** of the people killed by elephants in India.




## Why is human-wildlife conflict a controversial issue in Kerala?

- **Geography** - Forest covers nearly 30% of the State's geographical area.
- Numerous densely populated human settlements are located close to protected forest regions.
- **Agriculture** - Kerala has a history of settler-agriculture since pre-Independence days, and state policy continues to allow such migration.
- Changes in agricultural practices in cropland adjoining forests also attract elephants into conflict.
- **Habitat depletion** - Elephants are far-ranging animals and fragmentation of habitats due to changes in land use squeeze the jumbos.
- **Invasive species** - Exotic invasive weeds such as Lantana and Senna have reduced the availability of food and water.
- **Monoculture** - Monoculture of species such as eucalypts and acacia has also adversely affected plant biodiversity.
- **Conflict tourism** - People blow horns impatiently, try to drive the animal away and even approach the elephant on foot for selfies.
- **Bull elephants** - The chances of coming across a rogue animal increase with the number of bull elephants roaming outside the forest whose number is on the rise in

Kerala.

## What efforts were taken by the State to reduce the conflict?

- **Trenches** - Elephant-proof trenches used in Kerala, are considered largely effective, provided they are properly maintained.
- **Hanging power fences** - In an Rs.620-crore masterplan to address the issue, the Forest department recommends hanging power fences that will be out of reach of elephants.
- **Indigenous plants** - As a part of Kerala's new eco-restoration policy, the Forest department aims to plant indigenous plants (wild mango,wild jackfruit) in the forest to ensure wild animals' food security and dissuade them from entering agricultural lands.
- **ESZ Norms** - Kerala's legislative assembly unanimously passed a resolution in 2022 urging the Centre to exempt the State from the Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ) norm.

## What is the need of the hour?

- **Early warning systems** can be created to track the movement of elephants, so that people can avoid going to locations where they have been spotted.
- **Elephant sensors** can be fitted along treacherous rail routes that cut through the reserve forest to avoid accidents involving elephants.

### References


1. The Indian Express | Understanding Kerala's man-elephant conflict
2. The Hindu | Kerala's escalating human-wildlife conflicts



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