

Lemru Elephant Reserve

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In news

State government of Chhattisgarh proposed to reduce the area of Lemru elephant reserve.

About Lemru Elephant reserve

- The proposal for the **Lemru Elephant** reserve was passed unanimously by the Assembly in 2005 and got central approval in 2007 with an area of 450sq km.
- The state government notified the reserve(as a conservation reserve) under Section 36A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 or WLPA. Elephant reserves are not recognised under the WLPA.
- It is located in Korba district of the state.
- The state Forest and Environment Department has proposed to decrease the area of the proposed reserve from 1,995 sq km to 450 sq km.
- Lemru is one of two elephant reserves planned to prevent human-animal conflict in the region, with elephants moving into Chhattisgarh from Odisha and Jharkhand.
- As per letter of the then Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) the reserve is part of an elephant corridor that connects Lemru (Korba), Badalkhol (Jashpur), Tamorpingla (Surguja).
- Badalkhol-Tamorpingla is also a elephant reserve in the state.

Why is the state government planning to reduce the area of reserve?

- The area proposed under the reserve is part of the Hasdeo Aranya forests, a very diverse biozone that is also rich in coal deposits.

- Of 22 coal blocks in the area, seven have already been allotted with mines running in three, and in the process of being established in the other four.
- As per the forest officials, the biggest challenge in increasing the reserve area was that several coal mines would become unusable.

Importance of the reserve

- Elephants are found in five divisions of the state.
- North Chhattisgarh alone is home to over 240 elephants. More than 150 elephants have died in the state over the last 20 years, including 16 between June and October 2020.
- Elephants in Chhattisgarh are relatively new; according to experts, they started moving into undivided Madhya Pradesh in 1990.
- While MP had a policy of pushing back the animals coming from Jharkhand, after Chhattisgarh was formed, the lack of a formal policy allowed elephants to use as a corridor a route in the north and central parts of the state.
- As these creatures were relatively new, human-animal conflict arose when elephants began wandering into populated areas in search of food.

Elephant Reserves in India

- There are 32 notified Elephant Reserves (ERs) in the country spread over 15 states.
- The Indian elephant *Elephas maximus* occurs in the central and southern Western Ghats, North-east India, eastern Indian and northern India and in some parts of southern peninsular India.
- It is included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES

- It is listed as Endangered in the IUCN list.

Various initiatives for Conservation of elephants in India

- Project Elephant-1992
- The Elephant Task Force Report, 2010 “Gajah”
- Gaj Yatra campaign-2017