



Deaths due to elephant menace in Hassan, Virajpet come down

Jumbos radio collared to monitor their movement

Bosky Khanna

BENGALURU: The human casualties due to man-elephant conflict in Hassan district and Virajpet taluk in Kodagu district has come down drastically in the last six months, according to the Forest department.

These two places were regarded the most sensitive and crucial to the department in the last five years. They were also known as high-conflict zones of the state for crop raids and human deaths.

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elephants have been radio collared and their movement is continuously monitored by dedicated teams, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (wildlife) Sanjai Mohan told *DH*.

The department has radio collared six elephants in Virajpet and Titimati and four in Hassan. These female-led

groups comprised a minimum of five elephants. The last human death in Hassan district was reported in August 2018.

Though 35 elephants were translocated from Hassan, the gap was soon filled up and so did the problems. Radio collaring has helped. Elephant movement cannot be curtailed, but by keeping

citizens informed and aware, problems can be reduced and this is what has been proved, he said.

Close to 150 staffers in Hassan and 100 in Virajpet keep a watch on the movement of elephants and send alerts to the citizens. The movement of these radio collared matriarchs is tracked on Geotracer (a dedicated mobile app). The staffers track pachyderms in groups, divided into 8-10 camps. Though crop raids cannot be avoided or controlled, deaths have been, Mohan explained.

Looking at the success in these two places, the department is now keen on extending the same to the other conflict zones. It is also seeking the help of IISc and other experts in this regard.

Mohan said that this was one of the department's achievements. Karnataka houses over 6,000 pachyderms and management is a challenge, especially when they move close to human habitation.

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