

PANEL TO LOOK INTO ELEPHANT DEATHS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

An elephant run over by a train near the Bagadihi railway station in Odisha. Special Arrangement BISWARANJAN ROUT

The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a “permanent” coordination committee that includes representatives of the Ministries of Railways and Environment to prevent elephant deaths on railway tracks, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said in a written response to a question in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Mr. Yadav said that 19 elephants were killed across the country on railway tracks in 2018-19, 14 in 2019-20 and 12 in 2020-21. Several steps were taken to reduce the number of elephants deaths, the Minister noted.

These included making permanent and temporary speed restrictions in identified elephant corridors and habitats, making underpasses and ramps for movement of elephants at identified locations, providing fencing at selected locations, erecting signs to warn train drivers about identified elephant corridors, sensitising train crew and station masters to avoid train collisions with elephants and clearing vegetation on the sides of track within railway land.

The Wildlife Institute of India, an autonomous body of the Environment Ministry, in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, National Highways Authority of India, National Tiger Conservation Authority and World Bank Group, has published a document named “Ecofriendly measures to mitigate impacts of linear infrastructure” to assist project agencies in designing linear infrastructure, including railway lines, to reduce human-animal conflicts.

A Standing Committee on the Railways in 2013 had recommended restricting the speed of trains at vulnerable locations to reduce collisions. This translated into trains slowing down to 50 kmph or less in vulnerable locations.

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