

MISSION ARIKOMPAN

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The tusker popularly known as Arikompan near Santhanpara panchayat in Kerala's Idukki district. File photo: Special Arrangement

The Forest department will conduct a trial run at Cement Palam, near Chinnakkanal, on March 29 as part of its preparedness to capture the wild tusker locally called Arikompan.

Chief Forest Veterinary Surgeon Arun Zachariah told *The Hindu* that the Kerala High Court had not banned the trial run. "The four kumki elephants (trained ones) have already been moved to Cement Palam. The trial run is mainly an interaction between the special team and the kumki elephants in the topography of Chinnakkanal," said Dr. Zachariah.

According to Forest department officials, tusker Arikompan has reached near Cement Palam, the proposed darting area in Chinnakkanal. A Forest department official said the special team would block the tusker with the assistance of kumki elephants and prevent it from returning to the Periyakanal route. The Forest department has set up a temporary ration shop to lure 'Arikompan.'

The 71-member team led by Dr. Zachariah is monitoring the movement of the tusker.

Arikompan attacked a vehicle at Periyakanal, near Chinnakkanal, on Saturday night. According to residents, four residents of Poopara were travelling from Munnar to Poopara. Noticing the tusker on the way, the driver reversed the jeep, but it fell on the roadside. The animal overturned the vehicle and damaged the windshield and seats. The passengers, however, escaped. After the attack, the tusker reportedly moved to the Cement Palam area.

The High Court had issued a stay on the operation to capture tusker Arikompan and posted the case for hearing on March 29.

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