

IS ARIKOMPAN ON ITS WAY BACK HOME?

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Arikompan was spotted on the streets of Cumbum in Tamil Nadu on May 27, 2023. Photo: Special Arrangement

[The wild tusker Arikompan](#) is believed to be on its way back to its original habitat Chinnakkanal, when it encountered some major disruptions en route, leading to a diversion of its path to Cumbum town.

A senior forest officer told *The Hindu* that the tusker [reached Cumbum South in Tamil Nadu](#) around 8 a.m. on Saturday. "It is suspected that the animal encountered some disturbances there and accidentally moved to human habitations in Cumbum town. The movement of the tusker clearly indicates that the animal is attempting a return to its own habitat," he said.

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"The distance from Cumbum South to Mathikettan is around 35 km. The passage, however, has disruptions in the form of human habitations, blocking the movement of the tusker," the officer said.

High Range Circle Chief Conservator of Forests Arun R.S. said elephants were a homing nature animal and the tusker was trying to move back to its habitat at Chinnakkanal. "The locations from Mathikettan to the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Thekkady were once connected with elephant corridors. The tusker may have recollected its old journeys through these passages," he said.

Elephant expert and High Court-appointed expert committee member P.S. Essa said the committee had only two options to solve the Arikompan issue at Chinnakkanal.

"Translocation or releasing it to its own habitat were the only options before the expert committee. The committee mainly considered people's security and decided to translocate the animal. It had originally suggested Parambikulam for translocation, which could have minimised the chances of it returning," he said.

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"The expert committee later selected Thekkady after considering the State government's recommendation too," Dr. Essa said.

PTR Field Director and one of the High Court-appointed committee members P.P. Pramod said the committee took decisions as per the High Court directive. "The committee totally followed the directives of the court," he said.

Mr. Arun said the Forest department decided to capture tusker Arikompan due to its destructive nature. "There have been no human-elephant conflict cases reported from Chinnakkanal and Santhanpara panchayats after the capture of Arikompan three weeks ago. Arikompan has a habit of [attacking homes for rice](#), which gives sleepless nights to people," he says.

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