

JUMBO CARE! INDIA GETS ITS FIRST DEDICATED ELEPHANT HOSPITAL

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Novel initiative: The hospital has facilities for thermal imaging, ultrasonography, hydrotherapy and quarantine.

India's elephants now have their first dedicated hospital near the Taj Mahal, complete with wireless digital X-Ray, laser treatment and dental X-ray facilities. The 'jumbo' hospital is the result of a collaboration between the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department and conservation NGO Wildlife SOS.

The veterinary hospital has modern medical facilities for the treatment of elephants in distress, including thermal imaging, ultrasonography, hydrotherapy, tranquillisation equipment and quarantine. Located near Agra, the facility is in the Farah block of Mathura, near the Elephant Conservation and Care Center (ECCC) run by Wildlife SOS.

Medical hoist

"The Wildlife SOS Elephant Hospital is designed to treat injured, sick or geriatric elephants and is equipped with a medical hoist for lifting elephants requiring critical care, a pathology laboratory, digital weighing scale, Elephant Restraining Device (ERD) with a dedicated indoor treatment enclosure for longer medical procedures," said Wildlife SOS founder Kartick Satyanarayan. "An observation deck will allow veterinary students and interns to observe and learn elephant treatment routines from a safe distance."

The hospital is jumbo sized: with a built-up area of almost 12,000 sq ft, including an observation area for the overnight monitoring of elephants under treatment using close circuit infra-red CCTV cameras. Training courses would be organized by Wildlife SOS to spread knowledge on elephant medical care, humane elephant management and veterinary procedures.

"This is a huge milestone for elephant protection in India," said Geeta Seshamani, co-founder of Wildlife SOS. "This hospital will help us take better care of injured elephants in distress. We hope this hospital will put India on the map as a scholarly destination for humane management of elephants, which will go a long way to address the protection and conservation of elephants in India," she added.

In 2010, Wildlife SOS established the ECCC, which currently provides lifetime care for over 20 rehabilitated pachyderms, rescued from illegal captivity and circuses, where they were subjected to cruelty.

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