



**Illegal Capture and Sale of Elephants from
North-East India to South India**
Media Articles and Research Reports

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About us:

Elsa Foundation is a non-profit charitable trust that focuses on conservation of biodiversity, prevention of cruelty to animals, animal rights issues of both domestic and wild animals. It opposes keeping wild animals in captivity.

We have travelled to several countries to study best practices and implement them in India.

The foundation supports various government bodies, in informed policy-making and decision making on critical issues impacting biodiversity and the rights of animals.

Our work areas are research, advocacy, awareness, publication, support in policy and decision making.

Website: www.elsafoundationcharity.org

Cover photo: Elephant calf smuggled from North East India kept for sale at Sonapur Mela, Bihar (Image by Sujit)

Introduction:

After the ban on timber logging in the entire country, by Supreme Court in Dec. 1996 (Godhavarman case), about 1000 captive elephants (out of about 2000) used for timber logging in North-East states were sold to various parts of the country, primarily to South India

Section 43 of the Wildlife Protection Act (amended in 2003) prohibits the commercial sale of Wild Animals (including elephants) but still, commercial sale of elephants continues violating the law

Elephants are in high demand in three states of South India.

That is Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The primary demand is from Kerala. It has the highest number (close to 500 as of Feb. 2022) of smuggled elephants in South India

The elephants are purchased by

- Private people for commercial exploitation.
- Temples (directly (or) with support from intermediate persons).

This high demand promotes illegal capture of wild elephants, taming them using barbaric methods in North East states.

These elephants are then sold to South India.

Once a captive elephant dies in South India, a replacement for it is done by this illegal mode.

This report captures details of these illegal operations by extracting information from research reports and news articles.

**Smuggled elephants from North East states kept for sale at
Sonepur mela in Bihar**



(Image by Pro Kerala)

Even though elephants' sale at Sonepur mela is banned in recent years, illegal trade of elephants is happening in various other channels.

CRUEL, GRUESOME TRANSPORT FROM NORTH-EAST STATES TO SOUTH INDIA

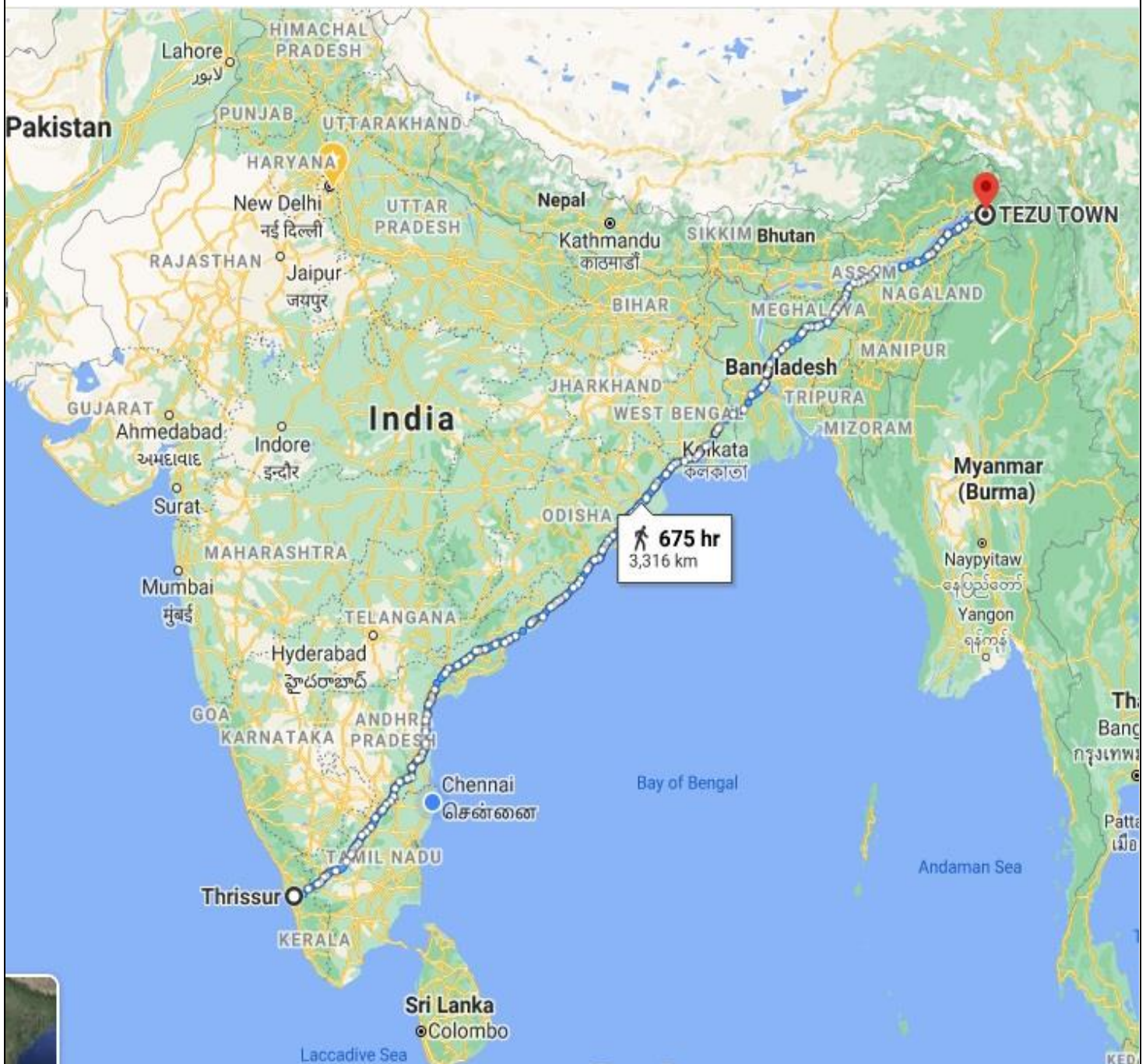
Elephants, when they are smuggled, undergo the cruellest and the most gruesome transportation. The elephants are forced to travel between 3000 to 4000 kms. in open trucks in the scorching sun, without proper food, water, rest and veterinary care for several weeks.

Elephants are not comfortable, travelling in trucks as they don't have any grip to stand when the truck moves fast.

More than 1000 animals had been mercilessly transported in this barbaric manner

The travel includes crossing several check posts in several states and invariably bribing many officials to transport the animals illegally.

For example, the travel distance from Tezu (Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh) to Thrissur (in Kerala) is 3316 kilometres. Lohit district is known for timber hauling using elephants and Thrissur has the maximum no of smuggled elephants.



Part - I

**Information about wild
elephants' illegal trade
extracted**

from

Research Reports

Study on illegal sale and transfer of live elephants from Assam

Chaturbhuja Behera, IFS

Regional Dy. Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Kolkata

Abstract:

Assam has a glorious history of its association with elephants, of taming wild elephants for domestication and harbouring maximum number of wild and captive elephants. Abrupt fall in the forestry activities since 1996 and subsequent deterioration in economic conditions of the elephant owners have spurred sale of captive elephants from the state in the face of public outcry, administrative and legal restrictions, and have created inter-state nexus for smuggling.

To study the cause and process of smuggling, the dynamics of demand and supply in the

Section 5.5. Gangs and network of elephant trafficking:

Some of the businessmen of Bihar and UP settled in Assam have developed links with the local agents in Assam for facilitating the transfer of elephants. Some of the elephant smuggler groups are a dealer in coal, timber and auctioned vehicles. They engage locals to mediate with the elephant-owners and settle the negotiations for transactions after paying an advance.

The official formalities of getting NOC, health certificate, DNA testing, transport permit etc. are done by the local agents with the help of the Government officials. The agents have developed close links with the officers dealing with the relevant jobs, which ensure the sale without any impediment.

The businessmen are quite conversant with the transporters, the buyers in Bihar & UP and know how to evade or circumvent checks on the forest check posts at the Assam-WB border.

Temples, religious organizations and political parties place their demand through messengers and sometimes directly through Government officials.

Captive Elephants in Assam



An Investigation into the Population Status, Management and Welfare Significance

Surendra Varma, Kushal Konwar Sarma and S. R. Sujata

Elephants in Captivity: CUPA/ANCF- Technical Report 18

All avenues of illicit sale should be closed urgently. Elephants, allegedly, are being illegally trafficked to bordering Nepal and Myanmar, through forest routes. Display at Sonepur Mela of freshly caught sub adults needs to be checked by institutions like Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and Traffic India. There is open trade happening in the State and there are witnesses to the same in Nowgong District of the State.

During the British period the privilege of keeping elephants was taken over by the new local feudal elite and the colonial regime. The colonial administration through forest departments, administrated and managed the forest resources, captured elephants from the wild regularly to be used in timber industries and plantations. The exploitation of the forest using all means including elephants continued till the Supreme Court of India imposed a blanket ban on any kind of commercial logging in the North East in 1996 and the same brought the entire timber industry to a complete halt. This rendered the elephants jobless almost overnight and without any viable income to take care of the animals which are very expensive to maintain, most of the private owners started disposing them off. **It is assumed that between 1997 and 2002, not less than 800 elephants were sold to Bihar and Kerala, Tamil Nadu or tourism fields in Rajasthan and Nepal.** Some owners in Assam were compelled to let loose their domestic elephants in the wild to become feral elephants.

Part - II

News Articles about illegal capture and trade of wild elephants



Smugglers on the prowl in Assam jungles in search of juvenile elephants

The smugglers have caught nearly half a dozen juvenile elephants from the wild last winter, and are training them



by ANIRBAN ROY GUWAHATI , July 1, 2019 8:22 pm



Amidst the hullabaloo over transportation of four elephants to [Gujarat](#), notorious wildlife smugglers are still on the prowl in the Assam jungles to catch juvenile elephants.

Though catching [elephants](#) in the wild is a criminal offence, and the punishment for the crime is seven years imprisonment and fine of Rs 10,000, the smugglers are unperturbed.

According to sources, the smugglers, in connivance with a section of dishonest Assam Forest Department officials, have caught nearly half a dozen juvenile elephants from the wild last winter.

A video of a training session for a juvenile elephant caught from the wild is in possession of **Northeast Now**, and the smugglers were busy teaching the baby elephant the etiquette of captive life.

Generally, the elephant smugglers engage tribal people from villages near forests to catch the elephants, and they target mainly juvenile elephants.

For every successful catch and training, the villagers get Rs one to two lakhs per elephants, the sources said, adding that the smugglers subsequently sell them at a premium outside the state.

Sources said the smugglers have already started negotiations with prospective buyers in the mainland to sell the juvenile elephants which were caught during the last winter season.

It has been reported that two of the four elephants which were being sent to Gujarat, were caught from the wild, and were micro-chipped the day of issue of the transport permission by the Assam Forest Department.

The two elephants in question have been identified as Rupsing and Rani. Though the elephants are about six years old, their names did not feature in the list of 905 captive elephants as on December 30, 2018.

The list of 905 captive elephants was submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forest by former Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam, D.P.Bankhwal.

While there is total ban on sale and purchase of elephants, the smugglers are smart enough to prepare documentation of the elephants caught from the jungles, and sell them in the mainland.

Arrest of notorious wildlife smuggler Md Mumtaj Siddique of Borhajan near Doomdooma in Tinsukia district in June 2016 had brought to light several facts about illegal elephant trade from Assam.

Md Mumtaj Siddique was arrested for his alleged involvement in forging documents for claiming his ownership over two juvenile elephants.

The smuggler had produced birth certificates of the elephants and had the seal and signature of Dr. Kalpa Nath Gogoi, the then Veterinary Assistant Surgeon of Kakopathar.

According to reports compiled by the **Northeast Now**, between 2008 and 2015, a total of 61 elephants were illegally sold outside Assam.

Unfortunately, there is no record of the return of the 61 elephants with the Assam Forest Department.

And in most cases, the forest officials don't know the present locations and well being of the elephants.

As per the record, in 2009, as many as 15 elephants were sent outside Assam. Similarly, 20 elephants were transported in 2014 from the state.



Jumbo-smuggling racket: 200 elephants illegally sold outside Northeast

Around 200 elephants from the Northeast were victims of a thriving smuggling racket that illegally sold them to different states outside the region in recent years.



By : Sentinel Digital Desk | 30 Aug 2021 7:13 AM

GUWAHATI: Around 200 elephants from the Northeast were victims of a thriving smuggling racket that illegally sold them to different states outside the region in recent years.

A case came to light during an investigation into two **elephants** that Forest officials seized when the racket was transporting the jumbos illegally from Arunachal Pradesh to Odisha via Assam in April 2021.

Sources in the Forest Department said that the kingpins of the elephant smuggling racket have links with a Nagaland racket that supplies fake documents on ownership of jumbos illegally trapped in the wild.

"As there is a ban on the sale of captive elephants, the smugglers in Assam use these fake documents for inter-state transfer of jumbos. The racket sells the elephants once it takes the pachyderms outside Assam," the source said. Elephants outside the Northeast are in high demand for religious rituals and other purposes. Meanwhile, the Gauhati High Court has given its verdict regarding the rescue of two elephants – Lakhi Prasad and Hari Prasad – seized during their illegal transportation from Arunachal Pradesh to Odisha through Assam April this year on commercial consideration.

A single-judge bench of the High Court comprising Justice Rumi Kumari Phukan has quashed an earlier order by additional sessions judge, No. 2 (FTC), Tinsukia, which had given the custody of the elephants to Chow Sonjit Pomong, the accused, hailing from Arunachal Pradesh. The elephants are currently with the Assam Forest Department at the **Kaziranga National Park**. The Doomdooma Divisional Forest officer seized these two jumbos during their transportation from Lathao in the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh to one Rabindra Kumar Singh of Shastri Nagar of Semiliguda in Koraput district of Odisha.

KERALA

Forest department unravels elephant smuggling case

**Sarath Babu George**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 06, 2020 23:37 IST

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 06, 2020 23:38 IST

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Kerala receives info from Bihar confirming forgery in ownership certificates of two elephants

In a breakthrough in its probe into an inter-State elephant smuggling racket, the Kerala Forest Department has received information from Bihar that confirms suspicion of forgery in ownership certificates of two animals allegedly smuggled by an absconding Kollam native.

While the development has provided an impetus to the investigation, forest officials believe it is only the tip of the iceberg, indicating the possibility of a larger network of criminals behind the nefarious operation.

The department launched an investigation into the suspected trade and illegal transfer of 200 elephants from various States a month ago following a “revelation” made by Kollam native V. Shaji on YouTube. The probe is led by the Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry), Kollam.

While Shaji, the main accused in seven cases that were subsequently registered, and four others are absconding, forest officials arrested his friend and alleged accomplice Sanal Kumar of Puthenkulam in Kollam. Two elephants were also seized from Kumar’s possession.

Chief Wildlife Warden Surendrakumar took up the matter with his counterparts in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam to ascertain the authenticity of the ownership certificates of captive elephants that were in the possession of the accused.

After verifying the ownership certificates of two of Shaji's elephants – Prasad and Modi – Prabhat Kumar Gupta, Chief Wildlife Warden in Bihar, officially communicated that the documents did not match with official records.

The actual ownership certificate of one of the elephants had apparently been issued to a Patna native. Besides, the original certificates contained microchip numbers that differed with those found in the documents furnished by the accused. The elephants are believed to have been brought to Kerala in 2015.

Concluding that the certificates were fake, the Bihar forest authorities urged their Kerala counterparts to initiate action, official sources said.

While the response from the other States is expected, the Kerala Forest Department is set to submit two complaints to the police pertaining to the alleged forgery. Prior to the ongoing investigation, the department had registered at least five cases against Shaji, an official said.

Home > States > Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu's jumbo owners under radar after illegal trade busted in Assam

After illegal elephant trade was busted in Assam, the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has begun scrutinising all elephant ownership certificates.



Published: 14th October 2019 07:59 AM | Last Updated: 14th October 2019 07:59 AM

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For representational purposes

By SV Krishna Chaitanya

Express News Service

CHENNAI: After illegal elephant trade was busted in Assam, the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has begun scrutinising all elephant ownership certificates. The Assam Forest department said 61 elephants leased to other States since 2008 had not been traced. According to a report from Assam's Wildlife Crime Prevention Unit in December 2007, 259 captive elephants transported outside the State between 2003 and 2007 have not returned.

Subsequently, a meeting held by the Director-General (Forests) of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on October 9 in New Delhi, which was attended by senior IFS officers from all leading States, proposed a few policy changes to curb illegal elephant trade.

State Chief Wildlife Warden Sanjay Kumar Srivastava, who attended the meeting told Express, "I have instructed all district forest officers to examine ownership documents of elephants transported from other States. For instance, there may be cases where ownership certificates are issued by Assam or Bihar forest departments and the owner sells the animals in the guise of leasing/gifting to a local person for one or two years and the elephant continues to get exploited."

The official revealed that the department was looking at a few such cases and would act after verification. The recent example is Malachi elephant, whose original owner was in the Andamans but was used for years in Madurai for begging and marriages. Eventually, the department rescued it and moved it to the rehabilitation camp in Tiruchy following High Court orders.

The original microchip number of Malachi was 0064DA686 (as per the Veterinary Officer's certificate, the Andamans). However, it could not be verified by Madurai officials during the inspection. Later, the microchip number was recorded as 0006477726. After the elephant returned to Madurai, following the court directions, the Forest Veterinary Officer of Coimbatore again inspected the elephant and since the microchip number could not be read, a new microchip number - 000659BB2D - had been implanted.

Animal rights activist Antony Clement Rubin said it was a dubious trade which needed a thorough investigation. "Information obtained through RTIs reveals that a few high-profile individuals and temples are having elephants brought from other States. The elephants are ill-treated and kept in inhospitable conditions."

Temples too under scanner

Sanjay Kumar Srivastava said a circular had been issued to all District Captive Elephants Monitoring Committees to inspect temple elephants and submit a report on their health. "It has been made mandatory to conduct inspection every three months. The temples have to approach to renew licence every five years and renewal will be cancelled if found in violation of TN Captive Elephants Rules."

ownership docs

State Chief Wildlife Warden Sanjay Kumar Srivastava instructed all district forest officers to examine ownership documents of elephants transported from other States

61 Assam elephants transported outside remain “trace-less”

While elephant smugglers eyed the captive-born elephants for sale outside the state, even juvenile elephants were caught from the jungles, for the illegal trade



by **ANIRBAN ROY** GUWAHATI , June 29, 2019 5:25 pm



Representative image

Elephants of Assam, be it in the captive or in the wild, have been the worst victims of the illegal animal trade in India.

According to reports compiled by the **Northeast Now**, a total of 61 elephants had been sent out of Assam between 2008 and 2015.

While elephant smugglers eyed the captive-born elephants for sale outside the state, even juvenile elephants were caught from the jungles, for the illegal trade.

Unfortunately, there is no record of the return of the 61 elephants with the Assam Forest Department.

And in most cases, the forest officials don't know the present locations and well being of the elephants.

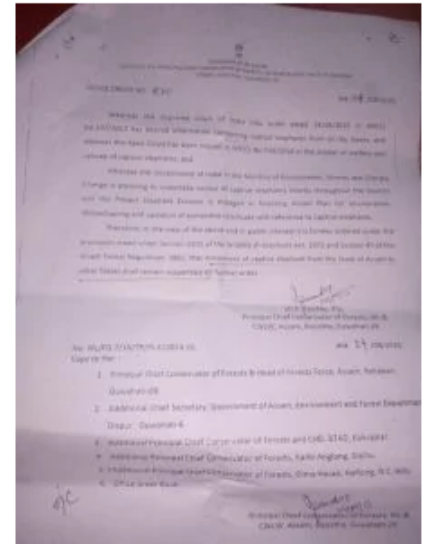
As per the record, in 2009, as many as 15 elephants were sent outside Assam. Similarly, 20 elephants were transported in 2014 from the state.

It is definite that all the elephants which were sent out of Assam between 2008 and 2015 were sold at high prices.

Fearing that the unscrupulous traders would sell more and more elephants from Assam, on September 24, 2015, O.P. Pandey, the then Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam had issued an order and stopped movement of elephants to other states.

Pandey's order (WL/FG7/16/TP/Pt-C/2014-15) was under Section 43(2) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and movement of elephants to other states will remain suspended till further order.

Interestingly, even after O.P. Pandey's retirement, there has been no movement of elephants from Assam to any other state from 2016 to 2018.



The copy of OP Pandey's order

It is still not known whether **Ranjana Gupta**, the incumbent Chief Wildlife Warden has revoked O.P. Pandey's order banning movement of elephants outside the state or not.

Can the Assam Forest Department allow transportation of any elephant outside the state without revoking O.P. Pandey's order?

While animal rights activists fought tooth and nail to stop the transportation of the four elephants to the Jagannath Temple in Assam, the issue of O.P. Pandey's order may again put the Assam Forest Department on the back foot.

OP Pandey's successor, Bikash Brahma had also initiated a lot of steps to stop transfer of elephants from Assam to other states. Brahma had framed a set of strict rules on elephant transportation.

Brahma had vetoed the set of rules by R.K. Borah, a government advocate of the **Gauhati High Court**, and had even placed it for approval of the Assam cabinet.

The dead man who sold his elephant in Assam

Nandeswar Moran, who sold the baby elephant on July 5, 2002, and signed sale agreement on June 25, 2016, actually died on October 12, 1993



by **ANIRBAN ROY** GUWAHATI , June 30, 2019 11:34 am



File image of Nandeswar Moran's brother Moneswar Moran with 'Babula'. Image: Northeast Now

Buy and sale of elephants in Assam is 'legally authorized' – and even a dead man can sell his elephant in this State.

As per Section 43 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, sale and purchase of elephants is a crime in India. And, if anyone is caught buying or selling an elephant, he or she will be imprisoned for seven years, along with a fine of Rs 10,000.

But, the rules seem to exist only in papers. And, sale and purchase of elephants in Assam is still going on openly.



The affidavit

One affidavit of sale of an elephant is in possession of **Northeast Now**, and it clearly showed that one Nandeswar Moran, son of Ratneswar Moran of Raiding village near Doomdooma in Tinsukia sold his 18-month old elephant.

The affidavit said Nandeswar Moran sold the 18-month old female elephant calf Pushpa/Pakhili to Md Mumtaj Siddiqui, son of Late Tenishur Rahman of Chinglijan village near Borhapjan in Tinsukia district.

The affidavit said the baby elephant was born on January 7, 2001 and the mother was Bhogmala.

It said the baby elephant was sold and delivered to the buyer (Md. Mumtaj Siddiqui) on July 5, 2002.

The affidavit was endorsed on June 25, 2016 by one P N Gogoi, (Notary registration number 3) of Tinsukia district, and the witness of the agreement, was a lawyer in Tinsukia.

A notary public is a public officer constituted by law to serve the public in non-contentious matters usually concerned with estates, deeds, powers-of-attorney, and foreign and international business.

In fact, Nandeswar Moran, who sold the baby elephant on July 5, 2002, and signed the sale agreement on June 25, 2016, actually died in his own residence on October 12, 1993.

The death certificate of Nandeswar Moran, issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths of Tinsukia district, is in possession of **Northeast Now**.

How can a person, who died in October 1993, sell his elephant in 2002, and sign the affidavit in June 2016?

Interestingly, the baby elephant was bought by notorious wildlife smuggler Md Mumtaj Siddiqui.

Mumtaj Siddiqui was responsible for selling 12 wild elephants caught from the Charaipung Reserve Forest to buyers outside Assam.

He was arrested on June 29, 2016, four days after the signing of the sale affidavit in Tinsukia.

Meanwhile, Nandeswar Moran's brother Moneswar Moran was also in news recently.

Moneswar Moran is the owner of the male juvenile elephant Babulal. Permission was granted by the Assam Forest Department to transport Babulal (along with three others) to the Jagannath Temple in Ahmedabad.

But because of legal intricacies and the heat wave in North India, the Assam Forest Department on Thursday kept in abeyance the permission to transport the four juvenile elephants to Ahmedabad.

Traders in Bihar and UP sold 167 Assam elephants in Sonepur Fair

Unfortunately successive Chief Wildlife Wardens of Assam failed to negotiate with their counterparts in Bihar and UP to bring back the elephants



by **ANIRBAN ROY** GUWAHATI , July 3, 2019 2:14 pm



Representative image.

What did people of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh do with the 167 elephants they got from Assam between 2005 and 2008?

A report compiled by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) showed that as many as 133 were transported from Assam between 2005 and 2008.

As per the record, 77 elephants were transported in 2006 from Assam, the highest in the conservation history of the state.

Similarly, 59 elephants were transported in 2007 from Assam. And, almost all the elephants transported in 2006 and 2007 were sent to Bihar.

During the same period, 34 elephants from Assam were transported to Uttar Pradesh.

Enquiries revealed that most of these elephants which were transported from Assam to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were for sale at the infamous Sonepur Fair.

Sonepur Fair is held on *Kartik Poornima* in the month of November- December in Sonepur in Bihar on the confluence of river Ganges and Gandak. It has its origins during ancient times.

The Sonapur Fair existed when Chandragupta Maurya (340 – 297 BCE) used to buy elephants and horses across the river Ganges. The biggest attraction of the fair was the *Haathi Bazaar* where elephants used to be lined up for sale.

Elephants used to be openly sold at the fair. As per records, 92 elephants were sold in Sonapur Fair in 2001. The highest of 354 elephants was in 2004. Since 2006, the open sale of elephants has stopped.

Most of the elephants sold in the Sonapur Fair, had buyers from other states, mostly Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The Sonapur Fair has been admired as the best bazaar for purchasing live elephants for temples in Kerala, especially for full grown tuskers. The Assam elephants were also acquired by local landlords of Kerala and kept them as status symbols.

Even now, there are reports of trading of elephants, during the Sonapur Fair. But now, the trade takes place in a private space beyond the realms of the infamous *Haathi Bazaar*.

The TRAFFIC, a leading NGO working globally on trade in wild animals and plants had surveyed and documented some of the elephants at the Sonapur Fair, and had found that the handlers did not possess proper documents.

While captive elephants from Assam were the victims of the smuggling network, a significant number of them were caught from the wild.

The elephants caught from the wild were transported from Assam with forged documents and that too, in connivance with a section of corrupt forest officials.

But, as per the law, any such sale of elephants is illegal. The transportation could have been justified and supported with adequate documentation, but the sale was totally illegal.

As per Section 43 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, sale, purchase or transfers of captive elephants from one person to another for monetary consideration or any other profitable gain, is totally illegal.

Don't the Assam Forest Department officials know that the elephants which they had allowed to be transported were sold openly in the Sonapur Fair?

Did the Assam Forest Department undertake any kind of action to locate the elephants, and bring them back to the state?

Or, did Assam's successive Chief Wildlife Wardens ever try to negotiate with their counterparts in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to bring back the elephants?

Elephant smugglers network run across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland

A proper investigation by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau or the CBI will be the only way to crackdown on the inter-state elephant smuggling network



by **ANIRBAN ROY** GUWAHATI , July 3, 2019 8:04 pm



Representative photo. Image credit - www.developmentnews.in

Smugglers run a notorious inter-state network in Assam, **Arunachal Pradesh** and Nagaland to sell elephants at a premium to the buyers outside the Northeast.

Mubina Akhtar, secretary of the Kaziranga Wildlife Society told **Northeast Now** on Wednesday that they have definite information about the modus operandi of the inter-state elephant smugglers network.

“This is really sad that we are fighting a losing battle in saving our **elephants** from the smuggling network,” Akhtar, a well-known wildlife journalist and an activist, said.

The smugglers are always on the prowl in the jungles in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland to catch juvenile elephants, she said.

Despite the strong provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Supreme Court’s directives, sale of elephants from the three states in northeast continues to be a thriving business.

“They (the smugglers) engage people of villages close to the elephant-inhabited jungles, and use them as *phandi* (elephant trapper) to catch the juvenile elephants,” Akhtar said.

The smugglers operating in the three states, in connivance with a section of dishonest forest officials, manage to make the necessary documents to legitimise the juvenile elephants caught from the jungles and transport them.

“There is every possibility that powerful politicians in the northeast are also part of the elephant smuggling network,” the wildlife activist said.

Two of the four juvenile elephants – Rupsing and Rani – which were to be transported to the Jagannath Temple in Ahmedabad, were also caught from the wild.



Mubina Akhtar. File image

The process of transportation of the four elephants was arranged on a fast-track route by the Assam Forest Department.

The Assam Forest Department officials issued transport permit to the elephants within hours of receiving the no-objection certificate from Gujarat Forest Department. Permission to transport Rupsing and Rani was granted the day both were micro-chipped and issued ownership certificates.

It is surprising as to how fitness certificate was issued to Rupsing, which had unhealed bullet injury on its left foreleg.

The bullet injury was also an indication that the smugglers had opened fire to injure and trap the juvenile elephant.

Names of both the elephants did not feature in the list of 905 captive elephants sent to the Ministry of Environment and Forest on December 30, 2018 by D.P. Bankhwal, the then Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam.

“It is crystal clear that the smugglers always manage to find out ways to legalise the elephants caught from the wild,” Akhtar said, adding that the role of the forest official in the illegal trade is always murky.

The wildlife activist demanded that the Ministry of Environment and Forest should immediately take cognizance of the issue, and order a high-level inquiry to put a stop to the illegal trade.

A proper investigation by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau or the CBI will be the only way to crackdown on the inter-state elephant smuggling network, Akhtar said.

30 percent decline in captive elephant population in Assam

Assam had captive elephant population of 1,303 in 2008 and it came down to only 905 in 2018



by **ANIRBAN ROY** GUWAHATI , July 6, 2019 3:50 pm



Representative image.

Animal rights activists are worried with the 30 percent decline in captive elephant population during the last one decade in Assam.

According to reports of the Assam Forest Department available with the ***Northeast Now***, it has come to light that there has been a sharp decline in the captive elephant population in the state.

A document *Elephants in Assam*, prepared by the Assam Forest Department, showed that the captive elephant population till December 2008 was 1,303 in Assam.

Surprisingly, as per the department's report on December 2018 to the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry of Environment and Forest showed that the captive population came down to only 905 elephants.

The report was submitted on December 30, 2018 by D.P. Bankhwal, the then Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam to the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry of Environment and Forest.

As per the 2008 report, Doomdooma Division had captive elephant population of 268, the highest in the state. Unfortunately, the population in Doomdooma came down to only 61 elephants in 2018.

In 2008, the Golaghat Division had 177 captive elephants. And, the population came down to only 80 elephants in 2018.

In Sibsagar Division, there were 100 captive elephants in 2008, and the population reduced to 76 in 2018.

Similarly, there were 58 captive elephants in Karimganj Division in 2008. The population was reduced to only 25 elephants in 2018.

While there are reports of many births of captive elephants between 2008 and 2018, it is surprising as to how the population could decline by 30 percent in Assam.

Actually, the population of captive elephants in 2018 in Assam should have been more than that of 2008.

Moreover, it is also reported that juvenile elephants are caught from the wild and are shown as captive born by the wildlife smugglers.

The state forest department has not cited any reason for the decline in the captive elephant.

Ranjana Gupta, the Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam was also not available for comments on the decline in captive elephant population.

"This is a serious issue," Dilip Nath, a well-known animal activist told **Northeast Now** on Saturday.

Nath said illegal trade of elephants is the main reason for the decline of the population of captive population in Assam.

"We have reports that several elephants were transported outside Assam with fake documents," Nath said, adding that people of Assam will have to join hands to save the last surviving elephants population both in the captive and wild.

Recently, the Assam Forest Department was caught on the back foot over transportation of four juvenile elephants to the Jagannath Temple in Ahmedabad.



Assam elephant in illegal custody of Srivilliputhur temple: Activist

A female elephant from Assam is allegedly being held in illegal custody by a temple at Srivilliputhur for years without any valid documents.



Published: 07th November 2019 05:30 AM | Last Updated: 07th November 2019 05:30 AM

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For representational purposes

By SV Krishna Chaitanya

Express News Service

CHENNAI: A female elephant from Assam is allegedly being held in illegal custody by a temple at Srivilliputhur for years without any valid documents. The 33-year-old pachyderm Joymala alias Jeyamalyatha was brought to Tamil Nadu allegedly on a temporary lease around 2008 and never sent back. Currently, it is at Natchiyar temple in Srivilliputhur while the owner is in Assam.

Responding to an RTI query filed by animal rights activist Antony Clement Rubin, Wildlife Warden Office of Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary in Srivilliputhur, the ownership certificate of Joymala, a copy of which is available with Express, identifies the owner as Girin Moran, of Tinusikia district in Assam, and he claimed the elephant was kept in a place called Kakapathar in Assam.

Rubin said Joymala's case is typical of Assam scam. Only recently, Assam forest department said 61 elephants leased to other States since 2008 have not been traced. Assam's Wildlife Crime Prevention Unit report in December 2007 reported that 259 captive elephants transported outside the State between 2003 and 2007 have not returned.

State Chief Wildlife Warden Sanjay Kumar Srivastava told Express it is illegal to have an elephant without ownership certificate. **"In our recent verification, we found there are seven elephants in Tamil Nadu whose ownership certificates were issued by Assam forest department or other States."** Joymala is one of them. These are old cases and some have made a request for transfer of ownership, which the department has rejected.

Now, I have written to forest departments of respective States and the owners will be asked to take back the elephants." Express was not able to contact the temple authorities for comment.

The recent example of such illegal trade is Malachi, whose original owner was in Andaman, but was used for begging and weddings in Madurai. Eventually, the elephant was rescued and moved to a rehabilitation camp in Tiruchy.

Ailing Assam elephant cries for help in Tamil Nadu

Devotees complained that the temple authorities failed to provide proper shelter to the female elephant, which was brought more than 18 years ago from Assam



by ANIRBAN ROY GUWAHATI , August 19, 2019 3:50 pm



Representative image

Kothai, a female elephant, which was transferred in 2001 from Assam to Adi Keshava Perumal Temple in Tamil Nadu, is in extreme pains, and is crying for immediate care.

The holy Adi Kesava Temple is dedicated to Hindu god Vishnu located at Sriperumbudur in Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu.

Devotees complained that the temple authorities failed to provide proper shelter to the female elephant, which was brought more than 18 years ago from Assam.

It has been reported that Kothai has been seen in extreme pain, and has been literally dragging its right hind leg while walking.

The elephant is unable to bend its right hind ankle because of some kind of an injury, the devotees complained. There is a swelling near the ankle.

Sadly, Adi Keshava Perumal temple authorities did not seek advice of any professional veterinarian, and relief the elephant from the extreme pain.

Still, the elephant is being used by the Adi Keshava Perumal temple authorities for religious rituals, including "begging" from the devotees.

The devotees complained that the health condition of the elephant has deteriorated during the last one month.

The Adi Keshava Perumal temple authorities have been torturing the elephant, and have always kept it short-chained for long hours.

As per the guidelines set by the **Animal Welfare Board** of India, minimum floor area for housing a captive elephant should be 9 meter x 6 meter x 6 meters. The height of roof should not be less than 5.5 metres.

According to the devotees, the shed where Kothai is being housed, it is less than one-third of the specification.

The shed was constructed when **the baby elephant was brought from Assam in 2001**. The elephant is now about 3,900 kgs in weight.

Moreover, absence of opportunities to walk has made the animal sick, and is often exposed to extremely hot conditions, under direct sunlight.

Forest officials have also reportedly served multiple notices to the authorities of the Adi Keshava Perumal Temple about the ill health of the female elephant.

It is still shocking as to why the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has not seized the elephant so far, and did not initiate any steps to provide veterinary care.

The Adi Keshava Perumal Temple authority is well connected politically. The temple is believed to be the birthplace of Ramanuja, the exponent of Vishishtadvaita philosophy.

While ownership of elephant is not allowed in India, it is still not known as to why Kothai, which was transported in 2001, did not return to Assam.

Hope the **Chief Wildlife Warden** of Assam, Ranjana Gupta will take cognizance of Kothai's case, and initiate immediate steps to bring it back to Assam.

Illegal Capture and Sale of
Elephants from North East
India to South India.

Elsa Foundation