

Illegal elephant trade



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Elephant was declared the National Heritage Animal in the year 2010, but the condition of elephants -- both wild and captive is miserable. In Assam alone, wild elephants continue to die from poaching, poisoning, electrocution, in trenches of tea gardens and industrial structures, and a mounting number of fatalities on railway tracks. On the other hand, smuggling of captive elephants has taken the form of an industry in the state. The Tinsukia district has become ill-famous for illegal-elephant trade. A racket involved in the capture of sub adult or juvenile elephants for the sole purpose of smuggling has become so strong that they brazenly advertise their “business” under the very nose of the State Forest Department.

This was stated in a press release by Kaziranga Wildlife Society on Monday.

What is more shocking is that the transportation of these elephants by the racketeers is simply unimaginable without the permission of the competent authority! Despite a Supreme Court order of May 4, 2016 that directs that the 'persons who are in possession of the elephants shall not transfer the elephants outside the State nor shall they part with the elephants by way of their transfer in any manner', transportation of elephants has continued. "Leased" elephants have never returned to the state. Since 2003, more than 400 elephants have been smuggled out of the state under the nose of the forest department. Local NGOs in the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts allege the involvement of forest officials in the illegal trade of elephants.

"We strongly demand the State Forest Department to come out with the present status of all the elephants that were "leased" out to other states in recent years and demand the State Government for instituting a high-level inquiry into this clandestine trade as well as to rethink the "lease" of the mega fauna owing to its precarious position." the release added.

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