

GAJ GAURAV AWARDS

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World
Elephant
Day 2025





In the 16th meeting of the Steering Committee of Project Elephant held on 29th April 2022 chaired by Sh. Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister, Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Govt. of India, it was decided to recognize the good practices adopted by the captive elephant owners and outstanding works done by field officers, frontline staff and private custodians in elephant conservation. To recognize the efforts towards elephant conservation, two awards based on extraordinary efforts put in overall elephant conservation in elephant bearing areas as well for elephants kept in captivity in the following fields were evaluated:

- Species Protection
- Elephant Habitat Management
- Human-Elephant Conflict Management
- Elephant Trade Control, Patrolling, and Wildlife Crime Detection
- Local Community Participation in Elephant Conservation
- Captive Elephant Welfare and Management

Award Categories

Frontline Staff:
Forest Guards /
Watchers / Trackers
/ Zookeepers /
Mahouts / Forest
Veterinarians

**Communities
for Protection and
Conservation of
Elephants and
their Habitats**

Contact:
Project Elephant
Ministry of Environment,
Forest & Climate Change
Government of India
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road,
New Delhi - 110003



State
Arunachal Pradesh
(Jointly)



Shri Ganesh Tamang

Designation
Elephant Mahout,

Miao Wildlife Range, Deban
under Namdapha National
Park & Tiger Reserve

Category
Captive elephant
welfare and
management

Achievement
Mr. Ganesh Tamang has over 26 years of experience in elephant care and conservation, with responsibilities that include elephant management and animal welfare initiatives. His work has contributed to the development of animal care standards and staff protocols. Through active participation in daily operations and guidance roles, he has influenced practices related to elephant well-being. Mr. Tamang is involved in wildlife protection and the management of ethical animal care, with his efforts recognized in this field.



Shri Sumit Gogoi

Designation
Elephant Attendant,

Miao Wildlife Range, Deban
under Namdapha National
Park & Tiger Reserve

Category
Captive elephant
welfare and
management

Achievement
Sumit Gogoi has spent five years dedicated to elephant care and conservation, consistently showing commitment to improving both elephant welfare and staff well-being.



State
Madhya Pradesh
(Jointly)



Shri Kesu Singh Walke

Designation
Asst. Mahout

Kamasiri Range, Pench
Tiger Reserve

Category
Captive elephant
welfare and
management

Achievement
Shri Kesu Singh Walke, an experienced assistant mahout, has trained multiple elephants over decades. He played a key role in skilled maintenance of 'Ganesha' elephant. He also mentors new mahouts in elephant control and efficient patrolling.



Shri Sahadan Ram Lakada

Designation
Asst. Mahout

Kamasiri Range, Pench
Tiger Reserve

Category
Captive elephant welfare
and management

Achievement
Shri Sahadan Ram Lakada, elephant mahout of Damini, has efficiently monitored tigresses and cubs through daily 10-12 km elephant patrols. His regular reports on wildlife movement have supported forest monitoring efforts.





State
Tamil Nadu
(Jointly)



Thiru. S. Karthikeyan

Designation
Forest Guard,
Dharmapuri Circle

Category
Species
protection

Achievement
Thiru. S. Karthikeyan was involved in rescuing elephants that were injured on 21.04.2025 at the Cauvery North Wildlife Sanctuary. He participated in an operation to save an elephant and its calf that had fallen into an open well. In addition to these activities, Karthikeyan conducts regular patrols in conflict zones to monitor elephant movements, gathers data on elephant sightings (both direct and indirect), and documents incidents of conflict.



Thiru. M. Murali

Designation
Anti-Poaching Watcher,
Dharmapuri Circle

Category
Elephant trade
control/patrolling/ wildlife
crime detection etc.

Achievement
Despite knowing the risks to his own life, he has been actively involved in numerous elephant rescue operations across various Forest Circles. His hard work, sense of duty, promptness, dedication, and remarkable bravery, particularly in life-saving efforts for distressed elephants, have been truly commendable. His outstanding contributions not only highlight his personal commitment but also serve as an inspiring example to motivate Anti-Poaching Watchers and others working for the welfare and conservation of elephants.



Shri Irshad Ali

Category
Captive elephant welfare
and management

Designation
Mahout, South Sonaripur
Range, Dudhwa Tiger
Reserve Division, Palia-Kheri

State
Uttar Pradesh

Achievement
Appointed as a Mahout at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in 1994, he has been vital in elephant care, training, monitoring, and tourism. In 2018, Under official guidance, he rescued and cared for an orphaned elephant calf, "Durga," ensuring her health and integration with the herd. In 2023, he oversaw another orphaned calf, "Bhawani," attending to its needs and training elephants for monitoring tasks, all under senior supervision.



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