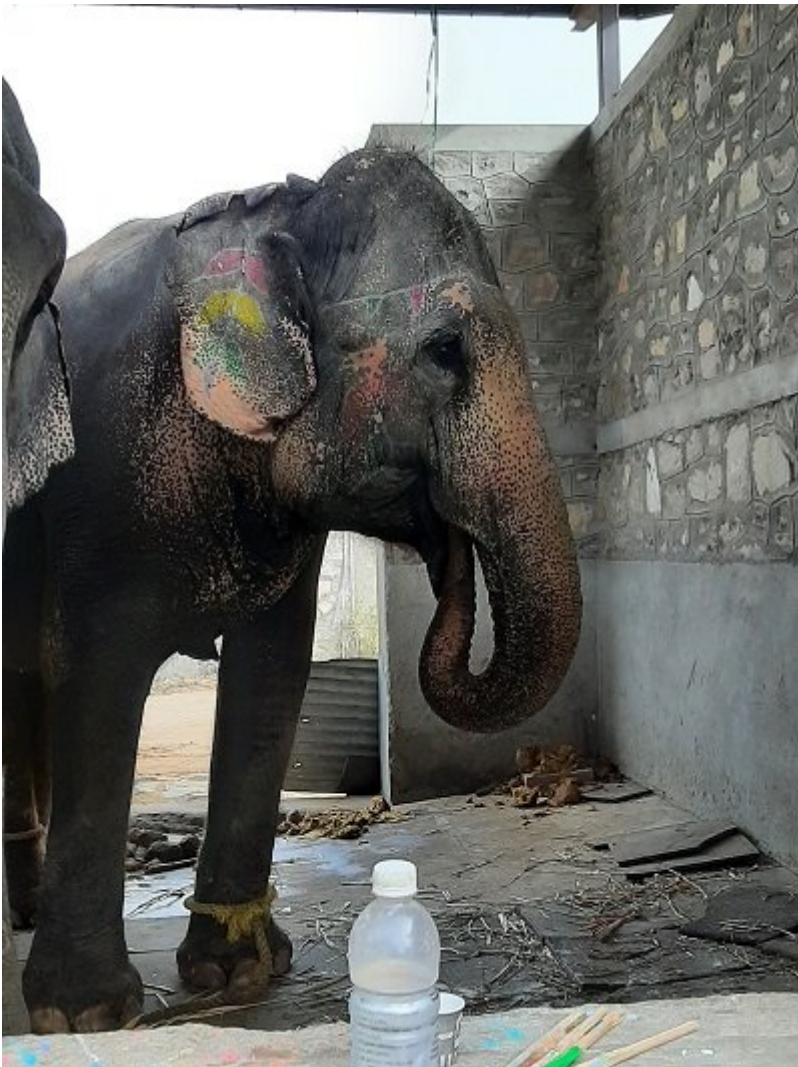


Elephant Rehabilitation Can Set Example for Captive Facilities, says World Animal Protection on Occasion of World Wildlife Day

Category: Business

written by News Mall | March 3, 2025



Wild animals in captivity everywhere need urgent rehabilitation, including the elephants used for riding in Amer Fort in Jaipur in Rajasthan. In the recent past, we have witnessed several cases of captive elephants killing and injuring humans in Kerala. These tragic incidents bear

resonance with the captivity of elephants all over India, including in Jaipur, where the proximity of captive elephants has caused injuries to tourists, mahouts and vendors. These elephants, that include those of wild origin, live a life of constant stress and pain, caused by their captivity and constant exposure to human activity, which is alien to their natural behaviour.



Elephant in Haathi Gaon in Jaipur Credit Shubhobroto Ghosh

For years, the captive elephants of Jaipur have endured brutality of all sorts, including the use of the ankush and food and water deprivation to bend them to the will of humans who seek to exploit them for rides and activities like painting and handling. Experience of the coronavirus pandemic gives us evidence that proximity to wild animals in confined spaces can give rise to zoonoses that can afflict both humans and animals. Apart from compromised animal welfare and abetment to wildlife trade, both legal and illegal, wild animals in entertainment, like the elephants of Amer Fort in Jaipur, represent a travesty of man's relationship with nature.

Wild animals have evolved to live free where they belong in the wild, elephants and tigers in pristine forests and dolphins in the open ocean. To incarcerate these animals in captivity for human pleasure is not only animal abuse but also representative of the wrong kind of education about the natural world and the nature of animals in general. The need of the hour is to protect wildlife in the wild, in protected areas and beyond. There is also a need to be mindful of current factory practices that destroy the habitat of wild animals and cause untold suffering to domestic livestock. Dietary patterns and livestock rearing practices have to change to safeguard the welfare of domestic and wild animals.

There is a new proposal of the Rajasthan government to create

a zoo in Alwar. *“World Animal Protection proposes to the government of Rajasthan to allocate some space in the proposed zoo to accommodate the sick elephants of Amer Fort,”* says **Gajender Kumar Sharma, Country Director, World Animal Protection in India.** *“By aiding the cause of rehabilitation of the captive elephants that are suffering in Amer Fort and Haathi Gaon, the new zoo in Alwar can set an example for all captive animal facilities in India and abroad that wild animals can be rehabilitated within a zoo setting. This act of accommodation of abused wild animals in a zoo facility can redefine the role of zoos in conservation and animal welfare.”*

“In addition to addressing the needs of wild animals directly, we need to be mindful of livestock farming practices to ensure that animal welfare is not compromised and that wildlife habitat is not destroyed,” added **Mr Sharma.**

Every day is World Wildlife Day and for animals like the captive elephants of Amer Fort in Jaipur, relief and rehabilitation cannot come sooner to drive home the concept that wildlife belongs in the wild.

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