**Three-day elephant census in southern States from May 23**

A synchronised elephant population estimation will be held across South India for three days from May 23.

The field assessment forms a key aspect of the resolutions put forth by the inter-State Coordination Committee, comprising Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, aimed at addressing human-wildlife conflict through joint action and intelligence sharing.

Andhra Pradesh too will join in the collaborative exercise.

The heads of the Forest departments of the four States had recently met online to discuss the methodology for conducting the census.

**Methods**

The enumeration will commence with block count sampling (or direct count) method on the first day, where forest divisions will be divided into sample blocks ranging from four to six sq. km. On the second day, the indirect ‘dung count’ (or line transect) method will be employed, estimating elephant numbers based on dung density and its distance from transects (or straight lines up to 2 km covered on foot for data collection) in elephant habitats. The third day will focus on the waterhole count method, identifying waterbodies frequented by the elephants.

In Kerala, the elephant population estimation will span approximately 610 sample blocks across the Anamudi, Nilambur, Periyar and Wayanad elephant reserves, with special attention to areas bordering Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Chief Wildlife Warden D. Jayaprasad said.

The assessment will also observe elephant movement towards various waterholes, considering the varying degrees of animal concentration in different regions.

A preliminary report will be drafted by June 23, followed by the submission of the final report to the State government by July 9.

Last year’s estimation block count and dung count methods recorded 1,920 and 2,386 elephants, respectively, significantly lower than the counts in 2017 (3,322 and 5,706 respectively). The Forest Department, which maintained that its findings in 2023 were “more precise” than those recorded in the previous surveys, attributed this decline to migration patterns influenced by climate and the 957 km of shared borders among Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.