

# Elephant habitats shrink in India as encroachments increase

GAUHATI, India (AP) — Wildlife activists say human encroachment in the forests of northeast India have forced elephants out of their natural habitats, triggering conflicts with locals.

Conservationists have urged the government to prevent encroachments and free corridors that are used by elephants to move across forests in search of food. In recent years, there have been many incidents where wild elephants have entered villages, destroyed crops, and even killed people.

Forest official D.D. Gogoi said in the latest incident, forest guards had to set fire to wild grass to drive back three wild elephants that came out of the Amchang Reserve forest in Assam state.

Villagers pelted elephants with stones but were chased away by the animals until forest guards came to their rescue.

“It’s an alarming situation. The elephants rampage through villages in search of food as their habitats are being



overtaken by people,” said Mubina Akhtar, a wildlife conservationist. “The government has to order the clearance of the elephant corridors.”

According to the 2011 elephant census, there were 5,620 wild elephants in Assam. The state is preparing to hold a fresh elephant census next month, Gogoi said.

### THREATENED AND THREATENING.

Wild elephants stand amid grass after being chased by Indian villagers near Misamari village on the outskirts of Gauhati, Assam state, India. Wildlife activists say human encroachment in the forests of northeast India have forced elephants out of their natural habitats, triggering conflicts with locals. Conservationists have urged the government to remove encroachments and free elephant corridors that are used by the beasts to move across forests in search of food. (AP Photo/Anupam Nath, File)

Elephants are increasingly coming into contact with people in India, as the human population of 1.3 billion soars and cities and towns grow at the expense of jungles and other elephant habitats.

India’s elephants are also threatened by speeding trains and illegal poachers looking for ivory to sell on the black market. Last year, 67 elephants were killed in Assam, after 118 were shot dead the previous year.

Forests guards are also trying to drive away elephants from railway tracks near the Amchang reserve area.

# Remote-controlled cleaning robot pulled from Fukushima reactor due to radiation

By Mari Yamaguchi  
The Associated Press

TOKYO — A remote-controlled “cleaning” robot that entered one of three wrecked Fukushima reactor containment chambers had to be pulled out before completing its mission due to camera glitches most likely caused by high radiation.

It was the first time a robot entered the chamber inside the Unit 2 reactor since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami critically damaged the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant.

Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) said the intent was to inspect and clean a passage before another robot does a fuller examination to assess details of the damage to the structure and fuel inside.

TEPCO needs to know the melted fuel’s exact location and condition and other structural damage in each of the three wrecked reactors in order to figure out the best and safest way to remove them. It is part of the plant’s decommissioning work,

which is expected to take decades.

The robot went only partway on a narrow bridge into a space under the core that TEPCO wants to inspect closely. It crawled down the passage while blowing off some debris with a water spray and peeling them with a scraper on its head, and about two hours later, the two cameras on the robot suddenly developed a lot of noise and its image quickly darkened — a sign of a mechanical glitch from high radiation.

The outcome means the second robot will encounter more obstacles and have less time for examination on its mission.

The robot is designed to withstand up to 1,000 Sieverts of radiation, and its two-hour endurance roughly matched the estimated radiation level of 650 Sieverts based on noise analysis of the images transmitted by the robot-mounted cameras. That’s less than one percent of radiation levels inside a running reactor, but enough to kill a person almost instantly.

TEPCO officials reassured that despite the dangerously high figures, radiation is

not leaking outside of the reactor.

Images recently captured from inside the chamber showed damage and structures coated with molten material, possibly mixed with melted nuclear fuel, and part of a disc platform hanging below the core had been melted through.

In this image released by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), a remote-controlled “cleaning” robot enters the reactor containment chamber of Unit 2 for inspection and cleaning a passage for another robot as melted materials are seen at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in Okuma town, Fukushima prefecture, northeastern Japan. The “cleaning” robot that entered one of three tsunami-wrecked Fukushima reactor containment chambers was withdrawn before completing its mission due to glitches most likely caused by high radiation. (TEPCO via AP)



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### What do you think? | Comment period Improved rapid bus service on Division Street



Local partners have worked for three years to define how new rapid bus service can improve transit reliability and safety on Division Street connecting Portland and Gresham. The Metro Council will approve this project so that it is eligible for a federal funding application.

Feb. 15 through March 31, 2017 [www.oregonmetro.gov/powelldivision](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/powelldivision)

The Metro Council is scheduled to hold public hearings 2 p.m. **Thursday, March 23, 2017** and **Thursday, May 25, 2017** and will take legislative action 2 p.m. **Thursday June 1, 2017** at Metro Regional Center, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland.

Submit comments Feb. 15 through March 31, 2017: by email to [powelldivision@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:powelldivision@oregonmetro.gov) | by mail to Metro Planning, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97232 | by phone at 503-797-1750 or TDD 503-797-1804.

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