

### 3. INDIA

## INDIA PLANS RESCUE OF ELEPHANTS

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INDIA is planning a concerted campaign to ensure the survival of its hardy population of 20,000 elephants, which are being forced into a shrinking habitat because of the plunder of forests by rural peasants.

The drive will be based on the Government's successful Operation Tiger, which has ensured the survival of the species four decades after the officers of the Raj went home with their hunting rifles. The tiger population is now around 2000.

Project Elephant, to be unveiled early next year, will be a low-budget operation, with about \$ 15 million allocated over a four-year period.

The elephant population, which has increased by almost 10 per cent in the past decade, is described by government officials as stable.

The project will focus on conservation programmes in areas identified as elephant reserves.

Attempts will be made to help rural populations find an alternative fuel to forest timber and the campaign against the ivory trade will be intensified.

The natural habitat of India's elephants is being eroded by unrestricted cattle grazing and

by villagers cutting down trees and bushes for fuel. Poachers also continue to roam unhindered through some areas of the main elephant country of southern India, having paid hefty bribes to wildlife officers and police.

There are hardly any bull elephants left in some pockets of the south and poachers are even slaughtering young males for their tiny tusks. But the Indian elephant is threatened less by poachers' bullets than by the need of peasants for wood, which is extremely expensive in India.

The plunder of forests has taken on staggering proportions, with forest cover reduced by half in four decades, leaving just more than 10 per cent of India covered by trees. An estimated 80 million cattle wander freely through the countryside, preventing forest regeneration.

Project elephant will be a far more complex operation than Project Tiger, which simply required the establishment of relatively small reserves. The elephants wander over vast areas, often raiding farmers' crops and even killing people when they are hungry and distressed.

Christopher Thomas  
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### 4. INDONESIA

## COUNTERFEIT IVORY BEING SOLD AS REAL THING IN LAMPUNG PROVINCE

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Plaster items sold as ivory are produced in large quantities and sold in the free market in Lampung, a forestry official has said.

The quality of the bogus ivory is so good that only those who are familiar with genuine ivory will see the difference, Eman Soma Su-

herman, Lampung chief forester told *Suara Karya* daily in Bandar Lampung recently.

The main ingredient for producing the spurious ivory was gypsym mixed with other agents and very carefully processed to make it look like the real thing, Eman said.