

## **TN Government wants to appoint Veterinary Officers**

Government urged to form special teams to avert human-animal conflicts. Environmentalists urged the government to form special teams to avert human-animal conflicts in areas such as Coimbatore, Valparai, Gudalur and Hosur. They also sought appointment of more veterinarians by the forest department and filling up of vacancies to prevent elephant deaths.

These were among demands made by the participants at an open discussion on 'Madukkarai Elephant Death' organised by Osai, a Non-Governmental Organisation, here on Sunday.

More than 250 people took part in the event and raised doubts over the need to tranquilise the 18-year-old tusker 'Kattayan' that was shifted to the Varakaliar elephant camp near Top Slip, last Sunday. It died in the kraal in which it was locked on Tuesday.

They also raised doubts such as – did it die due to drug overdose or was killed by forest personnel for its tusks, expertise of the team that trapped it and why it was not shifted to a forest. It was followed by a panel discussion on the entire episode.

Panellist S. Chandrasekar of Vanam Trust of India said that the revenue department and local bodies are also to be blamed for the encroachments and mining close to the forest. Environment Conservation Group president R. Mohammed Saleem claimed that the Forest Department did not consult veterans for the operation, hence its failure.

Another panellist N.I. Jalaluddin from Nature Conservation Society pointed out that damage of farm produce by rats was much more than the loss caused by the elephant. It is only because of its size that Kattayan was targeted, he added. K. Kalidas of Osai said that need to capture elephant Kattayan arose because ryots were preparing to kill it by shooting or poisoning.

Former forest veterinary officer S. Shanmuga Sundaram dwelt in detail on the risks faced by the veterinarians and the elephant while trying to tranquilise it. He also ruled out rumours of 'tranquiliser overdose' as the cause of the animal's death. Senior forest officer S. Thangaraj Panneerselvam spoke on the multi pronged pressure under which the department is functioning.

## Protest

Thanthai Periyar Dravida Kazhagam cadre were arrested when they tried to picket the office of the District Forest Office, on Monday, seeking removal of encroachments on the elephant corridor. Its General Secretary Ku. Ramakrishnan said that the elephant corridor here was encroached by religious and educational institutions. According to him this forced elephants to leave their path and enter human habitations.