

Indian engineer invents device to stop rampaging elephants

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An Indian inventor has created a device to stop rampaging elephants in their tracks, amid concern about human injuries and deaths when they run amok, his company said Monday.

Zachariah Mathew's Violent Elephant Control Gear has been designed to provide a humane alternative to sedating the animals, which are often used in religious festivals and are revered in Hinduism.

"During these festivals sometimes the animal is not well and might not be feeling comfortable but he can't express his feelings to you, so he will react," said James George, from Mathew's firm Senzo Engineering, in Mumbai.

"People close by fire sedative shots. They don't want to kill the animal but just bring it under control. Due to panic and fear, instead of one or two shots, they fire three, four, five, six and the animal gets an overdose."

Mathew's device involves attaching a fibreglass box weighing six to eight kilogrammes (13 to 18 pounds) to one of the elephant's back legs.

At the first sign of the animal turning violent, the mahout or elephant driver can activate the battery-operated device by remote control, sending a nylon belt contained inside to wrap around the tusker's other hind leg.

"The elephant is a very clever animal. He knows he won't be able to move. He won't fall at a great speed that may damage his leg. There's no problem," George, the firm's marketing manager, told AFP.

Trials have been conducted successfully in Mathew's home state of Kerala, in south [India](#), where elephants are also used in agriculture, said George, expressing hope the device will be sold across India and the world.

George said the cost of the device is yet to be finalised, although reports have suggested it will retail for about 25,000 rupees (540 dollars).

In August, wild elephants trampled a 66-year-old French woman to death and injured her son as they walked in the hill ranges of southern Tamil Nadu state.

In September, 500 villagers were forced to flee to relief camps after a herd of [elephants](#) killed at least seven people and trampled hundreds of homes in eastern Orissa state.

Elephant attacks in Orissa have become an increasing problem as their forest habitat dwindles due to human encroachment.

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