News

A rare disease has killed five elephants in Odisha. The four deaths in Nandan Kanan Zoo are the first reported cases of EEHV-related deaths in an Indian zoo while the death in the forest too is the first known such case in the wild in India.

EEHV

- EEHV is a type of herpesvirus that can cause a highly fatal haemorrhagic disease in young Asian elephants.
- The disease is caused by a virus called EEHV, or elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus.
- EEHV is lethal for young elephants between the ages of one and 12.

Symptoms:

- Most elephants carry just as most humans carry a cold virus.
- When EEHV is triggered, the elephant dies of massive internal bleeding and symptoms which are hardly visible.
- Some elephants show symptoms such as reduced appetite, nasal discharge and swollen glands, researchers say.
- The disease is usually fatal, with a short course of 28-35 hours.

No cure yet:

- There is no true cure for herpes-viruses in animals or in humans because herpes viruses go latent.
- The disease has a short course which means that we have to take a very quick call on a suspected EEHV case and kick off treatment protocols.
- This treatment is a combination of anti-viral therapy, aggressive fluid therapy (to counter haemorrhaging), immuno-stimulant drugs (selenium and Vitamins C, E), anti-pyretics and analgesics (to bring down fever).

Why it is a concern?

- The death of the Chandaka forest elephant has worried officials in Odisha.
- If elephants in the wild start falling prey to the virus, then treatment will be very difficult.
- If a young elephant dies before reproducing, it affects the population of the species as a whole in the concerned geography.