PETA INDIA FUNDS COUNTRY'S FIRST VAST, FREE-ROAMING, FORESTED ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

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Bannerghatta Biological Park Expansion Means Captive Elephants May Live as Nature Intended

Bangalore – People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India, whose motto reads, in part, that "animals are not ours to abuse in any way", and Bannerghatta Biological Park have teamed up to create India's first elephant sanctuary in a fenced, forested space that allows elephants to move about rather than being chained in place, the common way in which elephants are still kept elsewhere. The sanctuary is home to 15 elephants, including 15-year-old Sunder – whom the Indian Supreme Court famously liberated in 2014 from a harsh life at a temple in Maharashtra, following public support from Paul McCartney.

Images of Sunder at the sanctuary can be seen here, here and here. More are available upon request.

"With the freedom to engage in natural behaviour within a large open space to call their own, Sunder and his new family have the opportunity to thrive", says PETA Director Mimi Bekhechi. "While most captive elephants remain in dire straits, PETA India was able to make the dream of freedom a reality for 15 elephants, thanks to Bannerghatta Biological Park's help. We hope the sanctuary will act as a model for elephant sanctuaries throughout Asia."

This 120-acre sanctuary will allow the herd to roam, bathe in ponds and socialise without being restricted by chains. Designed by PETA India consultant and elephant expert Carol Buckley, a solar electric fence and a state-of-the-art emergency corral made of steel pipes are under construction and nearly complete. Elephant expert Margaret Whittaker – who designed the elephant and *mahout* (handler) training facilities and safety measures – will train local caregivers in the principles of "protected contact", a method of ensuring safe interaction between humans and elephants by keeping them separated by a sturdy barrier and using positive reinforcement techniques instead of the age-old routine of physical punishment to manage the elephants.

For more information, please visit **PETA.org.uk**.

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