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Elephants Attack Kanwariya Camp in Uttarakhand After Devotees Flout Forest Rules

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A group of Kanwariyas faced a frightening ordeal on Saturday night when a herd of elephants stormed their roadside camp near the Lachhiwala forest area in Uttarakhand. The incident, which involved the overturning of two trolleys and left one pedestrian injured, occurred after devotees violated forest regulations and reportedly provoked the wild animals by playing loud music and setting up camp inside a protected wildlife corridor.

The clash took place around 8:30 PM along the Dehradun–Haridwar highway, where a large group of pilgrims had set up a community kitchen near the Mani Mai temple, a known elephant crossing zone. According to officials, the camp was illegally established and featured DJ music and crowding that agitated a herd consisting of a male elephant, a female, and a calf.

“Kanwariyas had parked their trolleys along the forest edge and started a langar (community kitchen). Loudspeakers, flashing lights, and the general commotion irritated the elephants,” said SHO Kamal Kumar Lunthi of Doiwala Police Station. “They overturned two trolleys. One person sustained minor injuries while fleeing the site.”

Forest officials, supported by police, rushed to the scene and used firecrackers to drive the elephants back into the forest. No serious injuries were reported, but the incident caused widespread panic among the pilgrims. Authorities later cleared the area and put additional patrols in place to prevent further confrontations.

The area where the incident occurred falls under an officially recognized elephant corridor. Forest officials noted that the camp setup directly violated regulations that prohibit human activity in these sensitive zones. Warnings had been issued prior to the start of the Kanwar Yatra, advising pilgrims to avoid forested stretches and minimize noise.

This incident follows a series of concerns raised during the 2025 Kanwar Yatra season, with reports of public disturbances, road blockages, and other rule violations. Officials have now re-emphasized the importance of maintaining ecological balance and respecting wildlife during large-scale religious events.

Additional police forces and forest personnel have been deployed along the Dehradun–Haridwar stretch to enforce compliance and ensure the safety of both pilgrims and wildlife.