

Animal Rights Group Donates Mechanical Elephant a Temple

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Mechanical (Adjective) /mə'kænikəl/ operated by or relating to machines or tools
Example: The mechanical bull was by far the most popular attraction at the fair.
2. Replace (Verb) /rɪ'pleɪs/ to do, use, or have something instead of something else
Example: The new president promised to replace the country's existing immigration laws.
3. Ritual (Noun) /'rɪtʃu:əl/ a series of actions performed as part of a religious or official ceremony
Example: The wedding included traditional rituals, such as the exchange of rings and the lighting of a candle.
4. Parade (Noun) /pə'reɪd/ a large number of people or vehicles moving together, typically as part of a celebration
Example: Thousands of soldiers marched through Red Square during Russia's Victory Day parade.
5. Captivity (Noun) /kæp'tɪvɪti:/ the state of being kept as a prisoner or in a place one cannot leave
Example: It is estimated that there are around 5,000 tigers living in captivity in the US.
6. Chain (Noun) /tʃeɪn/ a series of linked metal rings used for pulling or fastening something
Example: My mom won't let me use the swing set at the park because the chains are old and rusty.



An animal rights group has given a mechanical elephant to an Indian temple to replace real elephants in traditional rituals. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) gave the robot to a temple in India's Kerala state after the temple agreed to stop using real elephants. The temple's priest said the robot will help the temple to continue its rituals and festivals without hurting animals.

Some Indian temples — and many in Kerala — keep elephants to be used in parades. However, most elephants in captivity in India are kept illegally, PETA said. The animals are trained by being hit by their owners, and are hurt by metal chains around their legs.

The Center for Research on Animal Rights said 138 elephants died in captivity in Kerala from 2018 to 2023. The robotic elephant weighs about 800 kilograms and cost around \$6,000 to build, local news reports said. It can move its head, ears, eyes and tail like a real elephant, but uses small wheels to move.

PETA said the robot will allow "real elephants to remain with their families in nature." PETA has said it wants to end the use of elephants in rituals and festivals, and move the animals from captivity into sanctuaries — places with a good environment where the animals are safe from humans. However, others say that while more should be done to protect temple elephants, robots can never replace real elephants in local culture.

DISCUSSION

1. What are your thoughts on the temple in Kerala using a mechanical elephant?
2. Are real animals ever used in traditional rituals or ceremonies in your country?
3. Would you be interested in seeing a show that uses robots instead of animals?
4. Do you think it should be illegal to use animals for entertainment purposes?
5. Have you ever seen an elephant in person? If so, how close did you get to it?