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Human-animal conflict

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Why is in news? Wayanad elephant kills man: Behind escalating human-animal conflict in Kerala

Wayanad is on the boil after a radio-collared wild elephant chased a 47-year-old man and trampled him to death, inside a gated property in a residential area. Locals allege inaction on the part of forest and revenue officials, and are demanding the capture of the killer elephant.

About:

Human-wildlife conflict is when encounters between humans and wildlife lead to negative results, such as loss of property, livelihoods, and even life.

Reasons:

Habitat loss, Degradation and Fragmentation: Species habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation are interconnected with population growth and land use.

Disturbance to Food Chain: As prey is not enough for predators (tigers), it leads them out from forests in search of food.

Land Use Changes: Expansion of urbanization and the expansion of livestock grazing drive species to shift their territorial and movement behavior.

Adverse Climatic Events: During calamities, animals come out from forests in search of water, food or shelter and result in human animal conflicts.

Accidental Deaths: Due to developmental activities and enhancement of infrastructure, such as passing of railway lines from the forests and electric wires. It sometimes leads to accidental death of animals.

Facts related to human animal conflict:

India has the largest number of **wild Asian Elephants**, estimated at **29,964** according to the **2017 census** by Project Elephant, i.e. about 60% of the species' global population. In 2020-21 (upto December 2020), **87 elephants and 359 people lost their lives** in human-elephant conflict.

According to the **latest Tiger Census** of 2018-19 conducted in India, **2,967 Tigers live in the country**. The population growth rate of Tiger is six percent per annum. India is home to 80 percent of tigers in the world. 92 people died in tiger attacks. Of these, **32 were in West Bengal alone**, followed by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh

As per the 2020 survey, the estimated population of **Asiatic Lions** is 674 lions in India.

Asian leopards, Bears, wolves, Jaguars and spectacled bears are the animals often in conflict with humans.

Impacts of Human-Animal conflict:

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Decline and potential eradication of species,

Financial losses and threats to health and safety, livelihoods, food security, and property.

Increase in Road and Railways Accidents due to infrastructure development in forested areas.

Steps Taken by Government:

Project Elephant: It was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Wildlife Protection Act 1972: It lays down the rules and regulations for the conservation and protection of Animals in India.

Protected Areas and reserves: There are 106 National Parks, 567 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 105 existing Conservation Reserves.

Project Tiger: It was launched by the Government of India in 1973, initially, the Project started with 9 tiger reserves, at present there are 53 tiger reserves in India.

Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE): It was established by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) at the tenth Conference of the Parties in 1997. It measures the levels, trends and causes of elephant mortality, providing an information base to support international decision-making related to conservation of elephants in Asia and Africa.

Operation Thunderbird: Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, coordinated Operation in India to fight against wildlife crime.

Plan Bee: It is adopted by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) which is a unique method to keep elephants away from railway tracks and plans are afoot to implement it all over the country to save the lives of elephants.

Wildlife corridors have been developed in many parts of the country. For example: In 2017, to protect elephant habitats, the Odisha government had identified 14 corridors.

Draft national wildlife action plan (NWAP) 2017-31: Suggestions in the plan include: The environment ministry ensure that developmental projects do not increase conflicts - Use of traditional knowledge to tackle conflicts, National surveys to collect data on wildlife-human conflict, formation of a trained workforce for forest departments to tackle conflicts

Some of the mitigation techniques:

Surveillance: Increased vigilance and protection of identified locations using hi-tech surveillance tools like sensors can help in tracking the movement of animals and warn the local population.

Improvement of habitat: In-situ and ex-situ habitat conservation measures will help in securing animals their survival.

Translocation of problematic animals: Relocating so-called "problem" animals from conflict zones to new locations is one approach. However, recent research has shown that this method can have negative effects on species and is largely ineffective.

Erection of fences or other barriers: Building barriers around livestock enclosures, creating distinct wildlife corridors, and erecting beehive fences around farms to deter elephants have all been shown to be successful and cost-effective strategies for mitigating human-wildlife conflict.

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Compensation: In some cases, governments have established systems to provide monetary compensation for losses incurred due to human-wildlife conflict. These systems aim to discourage retaliatory killings of animals and financially incentivize humans and wildlife to coexist.

Predator-detering guard dogs: The use of guard dogs to protect livestock from predators has been effective in mitigating human-carnivore conflict worldwide. A recent review found that livestock losses were, on average, 60 times lower in cases where guard dogs were used as a management technique.

Skill-development programs for people living in and around the forest would offer them better opportunities for self-employment and consequently reduce the combined pressures on agricultural land as well as forest land.

Specific targets for coexistence must be key elements within the Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD.

Implementing **Wildlife Institute of India Guidelines** “Eco-Friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts of linear infrastructure on Wildlife” These guidelines suggest modification in the designs of the linear infrastructures by way of providing an eco-friendly structure that will ensure the safe movement of wildlife across these linear infrastructures.

Way Ahead:

Awareness: The communication and interaction between the forest department and the locals has to be improved so that they can be sensitized about the issues and animals.

Wildlife corridors: Corridors allow animals to freely move from one habitat patch to another without crossing human-caused barriers which can put animals, and potentially humans, in danger.

Community Participation: Effective planning and implementation of such measures requires consideration of good principles in community led-conservation, in collaboration with the communities affected.

Increase in Protected areas: To conserve the animals and avoid any human-animal interaction more protected areas need to be developed by the Government.

Other measures: Includes barriers (fences, nets, trenches), guarding and early-warning systems, deterrents and repellents (sirens, lights, beehives), translocation (moving wildlife), compensation or insurance, providing risk-reducing alternatives, as well as managing tensions between stakeholders involved in these situations.