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Man-animal Conflict to be Listed as Disaster by UP Govt

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The Uttar Pradesh government has given its in-principle approval to bring man-animal conflict under listed disasters in the State Disaster Response Fund to ensure better coordination and relief during such incidents.

- The move will enable faster relief, creating awareness, ensuring police support in areas when such conflicts are reported, and proper guidelines to handle situations when wild animals venture in human in-habitation.
- The recognition of man-animal conflict as disaster under SDRF is a paradigm shift in handling such situations which will ensure better synergy among agencies and quicker relief to affected people.
- The declaration of such conflict under SDRF will also mean that police and local administration will step in as soon as such a situation.

Background

- “Living with the Wild: Mitigating Conflict between Humans and Big Cat Species in Uttar Pradesh” report by the UP Forest Department and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has analysed the patterns of attacks, and outlines the circumstances in which these shy animals injure or kill humans.
- It found that most attacks (90.6%) took place during the day, when the forest-dependent communities are most active. This suggests that tigers aren’t actively seeking out human beings as prey and “most human-tiger encounters are caused by humans accidentally disturbing tigers that are resting in fields or fringe forests areas during the day.”
- Since human beings are not a part of the tigers’ food chain, the attacks take place because the forest and fields are not separated by a buffer zone.
 - Herbivores, which are the natural prey of big cats, enter these crop fields in search of food.

- The report also suggests the changes in human behaviour that could help reduce the number of attacks — such as not entering forests alone, not leaving children unattended, and building toilets at home.
- Uttar Pradesh has 23 wildlife sanctuaries, besides Dudhwa National Park and Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, according to the data of a report by Wildlife Trust of India and the state government.
- The Wildlife Protection Act does not have provision for compensation in case any human being or cattle is killed by a wild animal within a protected area or sanctuary.
- The government gives ex-gratia at fixed rates in such cases a view to reduce retaliatory killings.
 - However, it is a time-consuming process and may take a year to get relief, that too if inquiry clears such a payment.
 - Delays in getting ex-gratia triggers anger among local population against protected animals which often results in tigers and leopards being killed by villagers.

Man-animal Conflict

Incidents of wild animals straying into human habitat poses a threat for both the animal and the people residing in that area and calls for serious questioning of the administration's attitude towards the safety of the animals as well as the people.

Causes of Man-animal Conflict

- Destruction of natural habitat of the wildlife.
- Overlap in the needs of wildlife animals and humans.
- Land use transformation, growth of human population as well as wildlife population etc. can be other reasons.

Effects of Man-animal Conflict

- Damage to agricultural crops and property
- Resource scarcity and livelihood effects on humans
- Negative impact on wildlife population

Solutions

- Creating artificial and natural barriers across wildlife and human habitats.
- Restoration of wildlife habitats to their original form.
- Relocation of human population settlements.

Eco Bridge

- An eco bridge or the eco conduct is an overpass that allows easy crossing of animals across human-made barriers.
- The intervention requires the laying of fertile soil to grow grass and plants over the structure, so that fragmentation of the reserve forest is camouflaged.

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve

- The Dudhwa Tiger Reserve is a protected area in Uttar Pradesh that stretches mainly across the Lakhimpur Kheri and Bahraich districts.
- It comprises of the Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The northern boundary of the park is being constituted by the Mohana River flowing along the Indo-Nepal border whilst the Southern boundary is formed by the river Suheli.
- It includes three large forest fragments - marshes, grasslands and dense forests, amidst the matrix dominated by agriculture.

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is located in Pilibhit district, Lakhimpur Kheri District and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh.
- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve was declared in September 2008 on the basis of its special type of ecosystem with vast open spaces and sufficient feed for the elegant predators.
- It is India's 45th Tiger Reserve Project.
- The northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.
- The study done by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) shows that Dudhwa-Pilibhit population has high conservation value as it represents the only tiger population with the ecological and behavioral adaptations of the tiger unique to the Tarai region.