Human-Tiger conflict

Why in news?

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The shooting of a tigress in Maharashtra shows that big cats were victims of human-tiger interface conflict.

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Click here to know more on the issue.

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How has the issue evolved?

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- The six-year-old tigress, named Avni, is survived by her two cubs who are 10 months old.
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- Of the 13 people killed in tiger attacks in the Pandharkawda divisional forest in over two years, at least five deaths were attributed to Avni.
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- The first order to shoot T1 was issued in January but was stayed by the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court after the tigress was found to be moving with her cubs.
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- The second order came after the three successive fatal attacks in August, leading to massive public outrage.
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- The operation to capture or kill T1 and capture her cubs had been going on since then, making it one of the longest such in the country to capture or kill a tiger.
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- The tigress was finally shot down recently.
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What are the concerns with tiger protection in India?

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- India is in a leadership position on the tiger front with almost 70% of the global tiger population.
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- India pioneered tiger conservation with Project Tiger by conserving 2.4% of our geographical area as tiger reserves.
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- However, our tiger reserves, national parks and sanctuaries exist only as small areas in a vast sea of human, cattle and unsustainable land use.
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- The stakeholders are many here, from primary (local people) to secondary (government departments) and tertiary (business groups, semi-urban scape).
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- Urbanisation and growth agendas alter landscape dynamics, which has a cascading effect on the ecological dynamics of wildlife.
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- This results in ecological dislocation of sorts, wherein endangered wild animals like tigers either cause distress or land themselves in trouble.
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- Our per capita forest is just 0.064 ha compared to the global average of 0.64 ha, which partly explains the forest resource dependency of a large number of rural people.
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- India has 668 protected areas, which add up to 14% of her forest area and 50 of these protected areas are tiger reserves.
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- But the concessions in our forests have caused overuse and abuse of resources.
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- Loss of forest productivity in terms of forage for wild herbivores has meant that the bulk of our forests cannot sustain medium-sized wild herbivores like deer, mega herbivores like elephants or big cats like tigers.
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- In fact, successive assessments have revealed that tigers are largely confined to their source areas (core areas of tiger reserves) and their fringes (buffers).
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- The bulk of other forests in most of India’s tiger states have practically lost their habitat value owing to excessive biotic pressure.
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- Consequently, agriculture and cash crops beyond protected areas readily lure wild pigs and other preys, which in turn lure big cats.
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- The inevitable outcome is “conflict of interface” between wildlife and

humans, which cause distress to people.
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- This “interface” is further influenced by urbanisation, rail and road transport infrastructure and intensive operations like mining or special economic zones which are part of the growth agenda in any developing country.
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What should be done?

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- Human-wildlife interface is here to stay and while there can be no “co-existence” with tigers or elephants, a “co-occurrence” agenda with a proactive management control is available.
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- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has brought out several Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to deal with various challenges of the human-tiger interface.
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- An incapacitated tiger or leopard has to be captured on priority.
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- A prime animal straying close to human settlements requires active monitoring and translocation to suitable habitat as in the case of an orphaned tigress shifted from the fringes of Bandhavgarh to Satpura.
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- This requires –
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1. 24×7 monitoring using technology
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2. Management of corridors
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3. Building up the frontline capacity
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4. Creating village teams for reporting wild animal presence
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5. Intersectoral portfolio at the landscape level akin to the “master plan” envisaged for an eco-sensitive zone.
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- Human-tiger interface management demands proactive measures.
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- One cannot allow a big cat to get habituated and then brutally eliminate it.
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- The Avni story is a tragic end for our national animal, and a complete travesty of the responsibility reposed on foresters and wildlife experts.
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Source: The Indian Express

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