Man-Animal Conflict in UP - Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- An adult, male tiger was beaten to death by villagers living next to Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit Tiger Reserve.
\n
- The continuing man-animal conflict near the reserve area calls for understanding the reasons and for concerted actions.
\n

\n\n

What is the concern?

\n\n

\n
- Dudhwa and Pilibhit tiger reserves are the last remaining protected habitats for tigers and leopards in UP.
\n
- The contest for space and retaliation between humans and animals has been a case for long.
\n
- Pilibhit, in particular, is known for the higher rate of human fatalities due to animal attacks.
\n
- Around 21 were killed in Pilibhit in 2017.
\n
- One tiger was declared a man-eater and subsequently captured.
\n
- It is mistakenly believed that bloodthirsty tigers in Pilibhit are actively seeking out humans and venturing far out of the forest.
\n
- However, a closer look into the nature of attacks proves this wrong.
\n

\n\n

What do the attacks suggest?

\n\n

\n
- Over half of the tiger attacks took place inside the forest or in the fringe areas.
\n
- This is followed by attacks in farmlands, particularly sugarcane fields.
\n
- Sugarcane fields occupy about a third of the district’s sown area.
\n
- A closer look reveals that around 80% of the victims are males.
\n
- Victims generally include those who enter forest to collect firewood.
\n
- Those who work in fields and defecate near the forest are victims too.
\n
- Most attacks took place during the day, when the forest-dependent communities are most active.
\n
- All these suggest that tigers are not actively seeking out human beings as prey.
\n
- Most encounters are caused by humans accidentally disturbing tigers that are resting during the day.
\n

\n\n

What are the reasons?

\n\n

\n
- Human beings are not a part of the tigers’ food chain.
\n
- The attacks clearly take place due to shortfalls in management.
\n
- The forest and fields are not separated by a buffer zone.
\n
- Herbivores, the natural prey of big cats, enter the crop fields in search of food.
\n
- This is when tigers enter the farmland too.
\n
- The situation is further complicated by sugar cane fields.
\n
- The crop provides ample cover for big cats.

\n
- It allows them to inhabit the space undisturbed for months.
\n

\n\n

What is the case with leopard attacks?

\n\n

\n
- Victims of tiger attacks are mostly adult males venturing into forests to a greater degree.
\n

\n\n

\n
- However, leopards are more prone to attacking children below 10 years of age.
\n
- Most of these attacks are concentrated in the adjacent villages.
\n
- They take place inside or near homes, in the peripheral areas and fields.
\n
- Notably, leopard attacks are relatively lesser in the fields.
\n
- **Reason** - Tigers cohabit with leopards.
\n
- Naturally, leopards compete with its larger and more powerful tigers.
\n
- As they have to survive with limited prey that is available.
\n
- Notably, leopards are known to avoid large prey, which could injure it.
\n
- So vulnerable children become easy targets.
\n
- Being opportunistic predators, leopards often prey on livestock and dogs.
\n
- But most of these incidents remain undetected.
\n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

\n
- Changes in human behaviour could help reduce the number of attacks.

\n
- Not entering forests alone, not leaving children unattended, and building toilets at home, etc have to be ensured.
\n
- A more long-term measure is the introduction of mechanical harvesters for sugar cane.
\n
- This can greatly reduce attacks on humans during harvesting.
\n
- Introduction of harvesters is likely to lead to people losing their jobs.
\n
- But in such a scenario, there is a need to find a middle ground.
\n
- Successful conservation efforts have led to a spike in big cats population.
\n
- It has also led to an increase in the number of conflict cases.
\n
- The state has to be prepared for any eventualities.
\n
- The most important aspect is to involve the community.
\n
- They have to be better equipped to live alongside these large carnivores.
\n
- This could be the most important long-term initiative.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering