Shoot-at-sight order for a Tigress

Why in news?

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The Supreme Court permitted the Maharashtra forest department to shoot a “man-eating” tigress recently.

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What are the concerns raised against?

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- Officials of the forest department have declared T1 a “man-eater” as the animal, along with her cubs, ate 60% of a human corpse.
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- It was accused of killing more than a dozen people over the last two years.
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- But it was argued that all the kills have taken place within designated forest areas or on their periphery.
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- The Pantharkawada forest is home to spillover tigers from the nearby Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary.
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- With rampant Human encroachment, contiguity of the habitat was disrupted.
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- The forest has scant food for wild herbivores, hence it also multiplies the chances of man-animal conflict.
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- There is heavy pressure of illegal grazing, with livestock consuming a huge proportion of the food and water meant for wildlife.
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- Locals take cattle and goats “on contract” from rich owners to graze them illegally in the forest.
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What should have been done?

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- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority protocols** say that the human beings killed due to chance encounters may also be eaten by the animal.
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- However, this is not sufficient for classifying a tiger as a man-eater, especially for an encumbered tigress supporting two cubs, in a low prey base area.
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- Hence, the Forest Department appears to be apathetic towards the basic tenets of habitat management.
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- Citing human and political pressure, wildlife coming into conflict situations is regularly eliminated.
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- The court has observed that the directions for Standard Operating Procedure under Section 38(O) of Wildlife Protection Act are merely suggestive and not mandatory.
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- It was also alleged that the forest department has already roped in a “sharp shooter” to kill the tigress, instead of first trying to tranquillise her.
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- This case reveals that a distinction has to be made between a tigress killing a human and a habitual man-eater.
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- Hence it is necessary to keep wild habitats safe for wildlife to ensure their long-term survival.
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Source: The Hindu

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