



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ECONOMY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Following repeated occurrences of fatalities in human habitats resulting from encounters with elephants, Kerala has introduced a series of both immediate and long-term strategies to mitigate the conflict between humans and animals. Furthermore, the Kerala cabinet has designated incidents of human-animal conflict as a disaster specific to the state. This classification grants district collectors increased authority to tackle the issue effectively.

### WAYS STATES HANDLE HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT AS A DISASTER

States in India have the authority to declare human-animal conflict as a state-specific disaster under the **Disaster Management Act**. This empowers them to take quicker and more decisive actions to address the issue.

- **Disaster Management Act: Section 71 of this Act** restricts legal challenges against actions taken by authorities during a declared disaster. This allows for swifter responses without the burden of litigation.
- **Overriding Effect: Section 72** grants the **Disaster Management Act** precedence over other laws during a declared disaster. This enables authorities to bypass certain regulations that might otherwise hinder their efforts.

### PRECEDENTS FOR STATE-SPECIFIC DISASTER DECLARATIONS

Several Indian states have declared unique events as state-specific disasters to expedite response and resource allocation. Here are some examples:

- **Odisha (2015): Snakebites** were declared a state-specific disaster due to their high prevalence and impact.
- **Kerala (2020):** The **COVID-19** pandemic's severity prompted Kerala to declare it a state-specific disaster.

**Other Examples:** Heatwaves, sunburn, sunstroke (2019), soil piping (2017), lightning, and coastal erosion (2015) have all been declared state-specific disasters in various regions.

By declaring human-animal conflict as a state-specific disaster, authorities gain greater flexibility to:

- **Mobilise resources:** Allocate additional funds for mitigation efforts, rapid response teams, and infrastructure development to minimise human-animal interactions.
- **Fast-track decision-making:** Bypass bureaucratic hurdles to implement effective solutions like building animal corridors or deploying deterrents.
- **Enhance coordination:** Foster collaboration between forest departments, wildlife agencies, and local communities to develop a unified approach.
- **Legal Immunity:** The Disaster Management Act serves as a **legal shield for relevant authorities during declared disasters**. This means that **lower courts cannot entertain lawsuits challenging actions taken under the Act**. Only the Supreme Court and High Courts have the jurisdiction to hear such cases. This legal immunity empowers authorities to take decisive actions without being hindered by the threat of litigation.

## WHAT IS HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT?



Human-wildlife conflict is defined as struggles that emerge when the presence or behaviour of wildlife poses actual or perceived, direct and recurring threat to human interests or needs, leading to disagreements between groups of people and negative impacts on people and /or wildlife.

**DIRECT CAUSES**



AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION



URBANIZATION



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT



CLIMATE CHANGE



WILDLIFE POPULATIONS GROWTH AND RANGE EXPANSION

## UNDERSTANDING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Human-wildlife conflict describes negative interactions between people and wild animals. These encounters have a detrimental impact on both humans and wildlife populations. It's a widespread issue affecting millions of people and numerous species across the globe.

## SEVERAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS CONFLICT.

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** As human populations rise and development expands, **natural habitats shrink and become fragmented**. This **forces wildlife closer to human settlements** in search of sustenance, increasing the likelihood of encounters. Imagine a forest shrinking due to deforestation. Animals that once thrived within it may be forced towards the edges, potentially coming into contact with farms or villages.
- **Competition for Resources:** Humans and animals often **compete for the same resources, like water, food, and space**. When **resources become scarce**, this **competition can escalate** into conflict. During droughts, for example, elephants might raid crops for food as their natural sources dry up. Similarly, a decline in wild prey populations could lead lions or wolves to target livestock.
- **Infrastructure Development:** The construction of roads, railways, and other infrastructure projects can disrupt animal migration routes, **hindering their ability to move freely between habitats**. This can **trap animals in isolated areas with limited resources or force** them to travel through human settlements in search of food and water. Roads can also become deadly barriers, resulting in animal-vehicle collisions.
- **Climate Change:** Climate change **disrupts weather patterns and ecosystems**, impacting wildlife populations. Animals might be forced to **alter their migration patterns or seek new habitats**, increasing the potential for conflict with humans. Rising temperatures, for instance, may cause deserts to expand, pushing animals into previously unoccupied areas where they may compete with humans for resources or come into conflict with livestock.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Sometimes, human behaviour unintentionally provokes animal attacks due to a lack of awareness about animal behaviour or the presence of wildlife in certain areas. **Tourists getting too close to wild animals** for photographs or visitors entering nesting areas can be seen as threats by the animals, leading to defensive attacks.

## MOVING TOWARDS COEXISTENCE

Several strategies can be implemented to reduce human-wildlife conflict and promote coexistence:

- **Habitat Conservation and Restoration:** Protecting and restoring wildlife habitats and corridors ensures adequate space and resources for wildlife populations.
- **Effective Land-Use Planning:** Implementing effective land-use planning and zoning minimises human-wildlife overlap and conflict.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Promoting sustainable agriculture and livestock practices can reduce crop damage and predation by wildlife.
- **Mitigation Measures:** Developing and deploying appropriate mitigation measures such as fences, deterrents, compensation schemes, and insurance schemes can prevent or reduce wildlife damage or loss.
- **Education and Awareness:** Enhancing human-wildlife coexistence education and awareness programs foster positive attitudes and behaviours towards wildlife.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Strengthening human-wildlife conflict monitoring and reporting systems allows for collecting reliable data to inform decision-making.
- **Community-Based Conservation:** Supporting community-based conservation initiatives empowers local people to participate in managing or resolving human-wildlife conflict issues.

## PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTION

**Q1. Consider the following statements in respect of Trade Related Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce (TRAFFIC):**

1. TRAFFIC is a bureau under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. The mission of TRAFFIC is to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: B**

## MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

**Q1. Evaluate the effectiveness of Kerala's approach in addressing human-animal conflict through both short-term and long-term measures. What are the potential challenges and limitations of these strategies?**

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