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Man animal conflict in Kerala

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Why in news?

The tiger which recently killed a tribal woman in Kerala has been found dead in Wayanad.

Owing to the the increasing number of man animal conflict cases in kerala the state government has declared the Man animal conflict as a state specific disaster.

What is Human-Animal Conflict?

- **About:**
- Human-animal conflict refers to situations where human activities, such as agriculture, infrastructure development, or resource extraction, come into conflict with wild animals, leading to negative outcomes for both humans and animals.
- **Implications:**
- **Economic Losses:** Human-animal conflict can result in **insignificant economic losses for people**, especially farmers and livestock herders. Wild animals can destroy crops, damage infrastructure, and kill livestock, leading to financial hardship.
- **Threats to Human Safety:** Wild animals can pose a **threat to human safety**, especially in areas where people and wildlife coexist. Attacks by large predators such as lions, tigers, and bears can result in serious injury or death.
- **Ecological Damage:** Human-animal conflict can have a negative impact on the environment. For example, when humans kill predators, it can lead to an **increase in prey populations**, which can then cause ecological imbalances.
- **Conservation Challenges:** Human-animal conflict can also pose a challenge to conservation efforts, as it can lead to negative perceptions of wildlife and make it difficult to implement conservation measures.
- **Psychological Impacts:** Human-animal conflict can also have psychological impacts on people, **especially those who have experienced attacks or property damage**. It can lead to fear, anxiety, and trauma.

Kerala government's declaration is in response to growing fatalities and public concerns over increasing animal attacks, particularly by wildlife like elephants and tigers. Here's a breakdown of the key changes:

Key Changes:

1. Shift in Responsibility:

- Prior to this, the **forest department** managed man-animal conflict under the **Wildlife Protection Act**. With the new declaration, this responsibility now falls under the **state disaster management authority**, governed by the **Disaster Management Act**.

1. New Decision-Making Authority:

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- The **Chief Minister** now chairs the state disaster management authority, with **district collectors** having authority at the district level. This gives the local authorities more power to make decisions quickly in response to man-animal conflicts.

1. **Direct Intervention:**

- District collectors, as heads of district disaster management authorities, now have the ability to directly intervene in such conflicts. This decentralizes the decision-making process, allowing for more efficient and localized responses.

1. **Faster Action:**

- With the involvement of the disaster management authority, decision-making becomes quicker, enabling a more rapid response. This can include overriding previous norms and regulations under the **Wildlife Protection Act** to address urgent situations.

1. **Legal Immunity:**

- The decision-makers are granted **legal immunity** for actions taken during the disaster period, protecting them from legal challenges unless the case is brought to the **Supreme Court or High Court**. This immunity encourages timely action without fear of litigation.

1. **Greater Authority in Decision-Making:**

- Previously, actions such as tranquilizing or capturing animals involved in attacks were often questioned. Under the new framework, these decisions can now be made with more authority, allowing for more effective management of such incidents.

Broader Context:

This move follows Kerala's precedent of declaring other state-specific disasters, including:

- Snakebites (2015)
- **Covid-19** (2020)
- **Heat waves** (2019)
- **Soil piping** (2017)
- **Lightning and coastal erosion** (2015)

By declaring man-animal conflict a state-specific disaster, Kerala aims to create a more **structured, empowered response system** that can address this growing issue with greater efficiency and effectiveness. This is especially important as human-wildlife interactions become more frequent, often leading to tragic consequences.