

**BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT****HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT**

Recently, a Standing Committee suggested that the Environment Ministry must constitute an advisory body of experts to tackle growing instances of human-animal conflict.

**Key Points**

- The report analysed the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 tabled in the Lok Sabha in December 2021.
- The report recommends an HAC Advisory Committee to be headed by the Chief Wildlife Warden, who can consult the committee to act appropriately.
- Advisory body would be packed with official members, exercise all powers of the SBWL and take decisions independent of the SBWL itself and end up being a rubber stamp for faster clearances of projects.
- Standing Committee of the State Board for Wild Life (SBWL): One of the clauses proposed by the Ministry was to have a SBWL to make the functioning of the advisory body “more purposive”.
  - A wildlife standing committee is usually a subset of members that reports to a wider Wildlife Board, in the case of States headed by the Chief Minister, and in charge of executing day-to-day matters.

**Human-animal Conflict****About:**

- It refers to the interaction between wild animals and humans which results in a negative impact on people, animals, resources, and habitats.
- It occurs when growing human populations overlap with established wildlife territory which creates competition for space and resources.
- Conflicts between the man and animal have occurred since the dawn of humanity. However, it has come to light ever more frequently in recent times.

**Causes of Man-animal conflict:**

- In modern times rapid urbanization and industrialisation have led to the diversion of forest land to non-forest purposes, as a result, the wildlife habitat is shrinking.
- The expansion of road and rail network through forest ranges has resulted in animals getting killed or injured in accidents on roads or railway tracks.
- The increasing population has also led to many human settlements coming up near the peripheries of protected areas and encroachment in the forest lands by local people for cultivation and collection of food and fodder etc. therefore increasing pressure on limited natural resources in the forests.

**Repercussions of this conflict:**

- Injury and loss of life of humans and wildlife, crop damage, livestock depredation, predation of managed wildlife stock, damage to human property, destruction of habitat, the collapse of wildlife populations and reduction of geographic range.

**Preventive Measures**

- Surveillance: Increased vigilance and protection of identified locations using hi-tech surveillance tools like sensors can help in tracking the movement of animals and warn the local population.
- Improvement of habitat:-In-situ and ex-situ habitat conservation measures will help in securing animals their survival.
- Re-locating of animal habitats away from residential and commercial centres will serve to minimize animal-man conflict for illegal and self-interested motives
- Awareness Programmes: To create awareness among people and sensitize them about the Do's and Don'ts in the forest areas to minimize the conflicts between man and animal.
- Training programs: Training to the police offices and local people should be provided for this purpose and the forest department should frame guidelines.
- Boundary walls: The construction of boundary walls and solar fences around the sensitive areas to prevent the wild animal attacks.
- Technical and financial support: For the development of necessary infrastructure and support facilities for immobilization of problematic animals through tranquilization, their translocation.
- Crop insurance should be provided in the event of destruction by wild animals.
- Part of CSR: Safeguarding Tiger corridors, building eco-bridges and such conservation measures can be part of corporate social responsibility.

**Way Ahead**

- A wildlife standing committee with few members and in-depth technical knowledge for evolving effective site-specific plans/ mitigation strategies including recommendations on changing cropping patterns and for taking critical decisions at short notice, empowered under the law, is necessary.

- A body should be constituted having at least one-third of the non-official members of the SBWL, at least three institutional members and the Director of the Wildlife Institute of India or his/ her nominee.
- The controversial clause in the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 that allows the “transfer and transport” of live elephants while recommending that the government could bring in additional checks to allow sale and purchase by religious institutions, should be amended.
- The well-planned, integrated approaches to managing human-wildlife conflict can reduce conflicts and lead to a form of coexistence between people and animals.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**1. Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs): Smart Cities Mission**

Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has announced that all 100 smart cities will have Integrated Command and Control Centers (ICCCs), under Smart Cities Mission (SCM).

- These ICCCs are spread across various states that have been developing Smart Cities, with states such as Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat leading in terms of the total number of ICCCs set up.

**What is an Integrated Command and Control Centre?**

- The Smart Cities Mission includes setting up ICCCs for each such city as a vital step.
- These ICCCs are designed to enable authorities to monitor the status of various amenities in real time.
- The ICCCs are now also linked to the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems) network under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The ICCC acts as a smart city and acts as a “nerve centre” for operations management.
- It processes a complex and large pool of data sets at an aggregated level.
- For example, it is now the go-to source for integrated traffic management monitoring.
- It is the nodal point of availability of all online data and information relating to smart services included in a smart city, such as like LED street lighting, CCTV surveillance cameras, air quality sensors, smart parking system, WiFi, electricity and water supply and billing, GIS, e-hospitals, property tax management, estate management, engineering systems, asset management systems, and other services.

**Role in management of Covid-19**

- The government used the ICCCs as war-rooms for managing the outbreak, with real-time surveillance and monitoring of districts across the country that were affected by the coronavirus disease.
- It provided information about the status of Covid-positive cases in various administrative zones of these cities.

**2. Cosmos Malabaricus Project**

Kerala and the Netherlands have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for a project named ‘Cosmos Malabaricus’.

**About Cosmos Malabaricus project**

- It is being jointly implemented by the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR), the National Archives, and the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.
- The project will be completed in six years.
- The project deals with the 18th century Dutch documents on Malabar which are considered the most extensive source of information about the period in Kerala between 1643 and 1852.
- The material is written in classical Dutch language and is available in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Netherlands.
- As part of the project, students from Kerala would get an opportunity to pursue Master of Arts programmes at Leiden University, while those from the Netherlands would be allowed to take up an internship at the KCHR.
- In addition to student and scholar exchanges, the KCHR and Leiden University will organise a two-week summer school each year on the history of Kerala.

**Aims**

- It aims to make the digitised Dutch archival material accessible to the majority of audiences, including international and Indian scholars and the people of Kerala.
- It will be done through translation and publication of summaries in English.
- It would help understand more about the political, social, economic and cultural history of Kerala.

**3. RS-28 Sarmat (Satan-II)**

Recently, Russia tested its new Inter Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Sarmat amidst stiff resistance from Ukraine in the ongoing war .

**About Sarmat**

- This was the first test launch of the ICMB Sarmat after having been delayed earlier in 2021.

- It was launched from Plesetsk in North West Russia with the intended target in the Kamchatka peninsula almost 6,000 km away.
- It is a liquid fuelled missile as compared to US ICBMs which have moved on to solid fuel systems.

#### **Development**

- It was widely known that Russia was developing a new ICBM to replace its older ones and an announcement in this regard had been made by President Vladimir Putin in 2018 .
- The actual development schedule is believed to have been further back in 2009 to 2011.
- The deteriorating relations between Russia and the Western Powers is said to have given an impetus to its development.
- Naming :The Sarmat is named after nomadic tribes that roamed the steppes of present-day Southern Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan in the early mediaeval period.
- According to Encyclopaedia Britannica: “Sarmatians were highly developed in horsemanship and warfare.”
- The administrative capabilities and political expertise of Sarmatians contributed to their gaining widespread influence and by the 5th century BC they held control of the land between the Urals and the Don River.

#### **Advancement and Capability**

- The RS-28 Sarmat (NATO name Satan-II) is reported to be able to carry ten or more warheads and decoys .
- It has the capability of firing over either of the earth’s poles with a range of 11,000 to 18,000 km.
- It will be the first Russian missile which can carry smaller hypersonic boost-glide vehicles.
- These are manoeuvrable and hard to intercept.

### **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Q1. The relaxation of AFSPA is welcome, but gradual efforts should be made towards its repeal by ensuring that law and order is maintained by normal means in disturbed areas. Examine. (250 words)**

#### **Introduction**

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act commonly (AFSPA) came in to force decades ago in the context of increasing violence in the North Eastern states. Passed in 1958 for North East and in 1990 for Jammu and Kashmir , the law gives armed forces necessary powers to control disturbed areas which are designated by the govt.

- AFSPA, which gives sweeping powers to the armed forces, has been fully or partially withdrawn from parts of three Northeast states — Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. Still, AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

#### **Body**

##### **AFSPA – a draconian act**

- It has been dubbed as a license to kill. The main criticism of the Act is directed against the provisions of Section 4, which gives the armed forces the power to open fire and even cause death, if prohibitory orders are violated.
- Human rights activists object on the grounds that these provisions give the security forces unbridled powers to arrest, search, seize and even shoot to kill.
- Activists accuse the security forces of having destroyed homes and entire villages merely on the suspicion that insurgents were hiding there. They point out that Section 4 empowers the armed forces to arrest citizens without warrant and keep them in custody for several days.
- They also object to Section 6, which protects security forces personnel from prosecution except with the prior sanction of the central government. Critics say this provision has on many occasions led to even non-commissioned officers brazenly opening fire on crowds without having to justify their action.
- Critics say the act has failed to contain terrorism and restore normalcy in disturbed areas, as the number of armed groups has gone up after the act was established. Many even hold it responsible for the spiralling violence in areas it is in force.
- The decision of the government to declare a particular area ‘disturbed’ cannot be challenged in a court of law. Hence, several cases of human rights violations go unnoticed.

##### **Should AFSPA be repealed?**

- The Army clearly sees AFSPA as a capstone enabling Act that gives it the powers necessary to conduct counter-insurgency operations efficiently.
- If AFSPA is repealed or diluted, it is the army leadership’s considered view that the performance of battalions in counter-insurgency operations will be adversely affected and the terrorists or insurgents will seize the initiative.
- Many argue that removal of the act will lead to demoralising the armed forces and see militants motivating locals to file lawsuits against the army.

- Also, the forces are aware that they cannot afford to fail when called upon to safeguard the country's integrity. Hence, they require the minimum legislation that is essential to ensure efficient utilization of combat capability.
- AFSPA is necessary to maintain law and order in disturbed areas, otherwise things will go haywire. The law also dissuades advancement of terrorist activities in these areas.
- Also, extraordinary situations require special handling.

**Way forward**

- Security forces should be very careful while operating in the Northeast and must not give any chance to the militants to exploit the situation.
- Indiscriminate arrests and harassment of people out of frustration for not being able to locate the real culprits should be avoided. All good actions of the force get nullified with one wrong action.
- Any person, including the supervisory staff, found guilty of violating law should be severely dealt with.
- The law is not defective, but it is its implementation that has to be managed properly.
- The local people have to be convinced with proper planning and strategy.

**Conclusion**

The practical problems encountered in ensuring transparency in counter-insurgency operations must be overcome by innovative measures. The army must be completely transparent in investigating allegations of violations of human rights and bringing the violators to speedy justice. Exemplary punishment must be meted out where the charges are proved. Neighbours believe in its nuclear doctrine through effective confidence building measures.

**DAILY QUIZ**

Q1. With reference to Fincluvation, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to mobilize the start-up community for better financial inclusion.
2. It was launched by HDFC and ICICI in partnership with the Government of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) none (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) **only 1**

Q2. With reference to Cosmos Malabaricus project, consider the following statements:

1. It is being jointly implemented by India and England .
2. It is aimed at shedding light on the history of Kerala using 18th Century Dutch documents.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q3. With reference to Smart Cities Mission , consider the following statements:

1. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched in 2015.
2. It has only two focused areas namely construction of walkways and pedestrian crossings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q4. With reference to the UNSC reforms, which of the following countries belongs to the G4 grouping?

1. France
2. Japan
3. India
4. Mexico

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) **2 and 3 only** (b) 2 and 4 only  
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 3 and 4

Q5. Which of the following statement(s) is/are true with respect to Andaman islands:

1. Port Blair is located in Middle Andaman.
2. Duncan passage separates South Andaman from Little Andaman.
3. Saddle hill is located in North Andaman.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) **2 and 3 only**  
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 3 and 2