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THIS STORY IS FROM SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

Jungle tale: Encroaching humans, unhidden conflicts

Soumitra Trivedi (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toireporter/author-Soumitra-Trivedi-479253122.cms) / TNN / Updated: Sep 9, 2021, 07:19 IST

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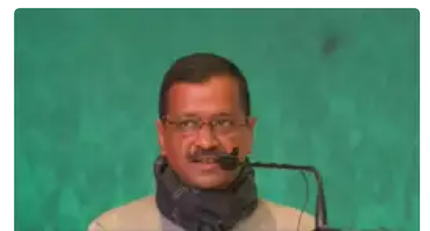


The latest data of the state's forest department shows that 28 people lost their lives in 2019-20 in animal encounters, taking the toll up 47.3% from the previous year when the state recorded 19 deaths.

AHMEDABAD: Encroachments in forest areas and increasing big cat population are among the factors that have escalated human-animal conflicts in Gujarat, pushing up people's deaths to a decadal high. The latest data of the state's forest department shows that 28 people lost their lives in 2019-20 in animal encounters, taking the toll up 47.3% from the previous year when the state recorded 19 deaths.

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FATAL CROSSINGS

Numbers need perspective

S Singh said that human-animal conflicts must be seen in the historical perspective. "According to the January 1907 issue of Indian Forester Journal, India's oldest document of forestry and wildlife, 2,167 deaths were reported in the country in 1904 when India's human population was one-fifth of the present population," he said. "Of these deaths, 45 human deaths were caused by elephant attacks, 401 by leopard attacks, 786 by tiger attacks, 153 by wolf attacks, 88 by bear attacks, and 24 by hyena attacks." He added: "As many as 555 people had lost their lives in conflicts with other species." Singh said that if we compare today's situation with that of 1904, it will become evident that attacks by carnivorous animals have decreased while elephant attacks have increased manifold.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN (2017 GUIDELINES)

- 1 Conduct surveys
- 2 Ascertain population status and trends for various species involved in intensive conflict situations with people
- 3 Develop national and regional conflict-mitigation plans
- 4 Streamline the official procedure for payment of ex gratia relief to the victims of HWC
- 5 Offer quick and proper medical treatment and rehabilitation support to victims

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICTS

	Deaths	Injuries	Compensation* (%)
2019-20	28	17	1.16 cr 71.68
2018-19	19	8	67.52 L 33.5 L
2017-18	17	7	71.3 L 30.2 L
2016-17	19	9	73.1 L 35.7 L
2015-16	19	14	36.9 L 27.1 L
2014-15	20	7	34 L 11.9 L
2013-14	24	9	42.6 L 16.8 L
2012-13	15	11	26.8 L 18.3 L
2011-12	28	16	43.8 L 23.9 L
2010-11	16	14	23.1 L 16.0 L
Total			5.35 cr 2.85 cr

PEOPLE-INDUCED PROBLEM

The Indian government's National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-2031) has identified human-wildlife conflict (HWC) as largely a human-induced phenomenon, combined with species-specific behavioural ecology of animals and external environmental factors. Thus, all conflict-mitigation measures should be developed on the basic premise of meaningful engagement with and the participation of all primary stakeholders, especially local communities.

CATTLE INJURIES & DEATHS

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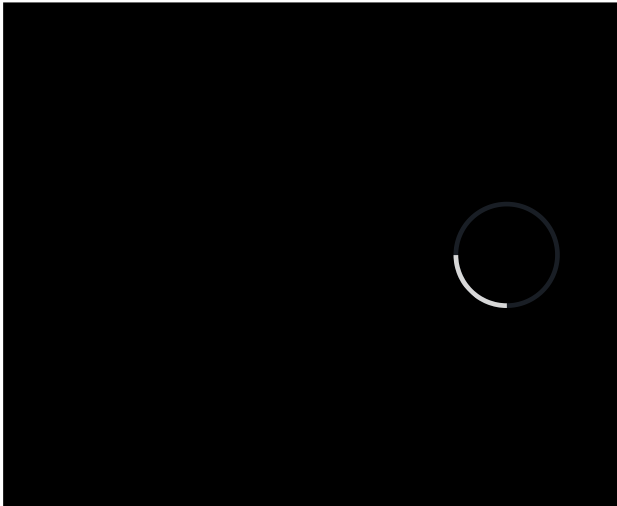
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The figure of 28 deaths was last registered in 2011-12. As many as 205 people lost their lives between 2010 and 2020. "Of the 205 deaths, 106 or 51.7% of the total were in Junagadh alone," said a senior forest department officer. "In all, 1,310 cases were reported in which people received injuries in the same period." The officer added: "Of these, 718 cases or 54.8% of the total were from Junagadh."

The officer said that the state government has paid Rs 5.35 crore in compensation for human deaths and injuries during the period in question. Of that, Rs 2.85 crore was paid to Junagadh victims. Experts said that most human deaths and injuries were the result of leopard attacks and only a small number were caused by lions.

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“Lions do not attack humans unless they are threatened. A lioness with cubs may get aggressive,” said H S Singh, a member of India’s National Board for Wildlife and an expert on Asiatic lions. Singh went on to say: “Leopards are stealthy and tend to attack humans. Every year, only one or two lion attacks are reported while the remaining attacks are attributable to leopards, sloth bears, and crocodiles.”

Singh said that a majority of lion attacks are on cattle. In all, 36,568 cases of cattle deaths and injuries were reported in the state between 2010 and 2020. Of these, 28,071 or 76.4% were reported in Junagadh. A few days ago, a video of two lions hunting down a cow on the side of a busy road in Bhavnath in Junagadh had gone viral.

R D Kamboj, a former director of the Gujarat Ecological Education and Research (GEER) Foundation, said that leopards have been traditionally known for attacks on humans while the number of lion attacks have been miniscule.

A senior forest department official said that the reason behind the increase in human-animal conflicts is the shrinkage of the natural habitats of lions and leopards and the rise in the big cat population over the years.

Officials said that the leopard population in Gujarat rose to about 3,200 in 2021 from 1,395 in 2016. The lion population in the state was 674 in 2020, up from 523 in 2015.

According to the Forest Survey of India, the forest cover in Gujarat stood at 14,857 sq km in 2019, up by about 100 sq km from 14,757 sq km in 2017. However, the open forest area slipped drastically by 200 sq km in 2019. Open forests are the natural habitats of Asiatic lions.

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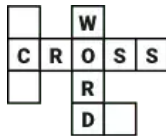
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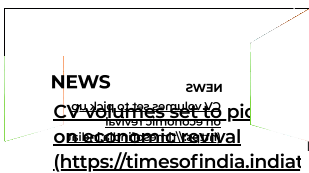


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Maharashtra allows 'overdraft' facility to pay kin of those killed by wild animals

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Vijay Pinjarkar (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toireporter/author-Vijay-Pinjarkar-479164675.cms>) / TNN / Updated: Sep 17, 2021, 10:39 IST

Headline: Enforce overdraft facility to pay kin of those killed by wild animal

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NASPIK, a major relief to forest department, which is grappling with worst ever human-animal

conflict, the state government has restored the negative budgeting system. This allows payment of compensation for human and cattle kills, and crop deprecation even when there is no money in the account.

The state government pays Rs15 lakh compensation to kin of victims who die in wild animal attacks. If there are limited funds, or if funds have lapsed, there was a provision to pay money to the kin, but finance department had withdrawn this facility last March owing to Covid-19 triggering a funds crunch.

The scheme had been introduced in 2010-11 in budget distribution system (BDS), which allowed overdraft to make payment for cattle kill, crop damage and human kill by wild animals.

“The negative budgeting restarted from September 3. It is big support from the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. In the face of delayed compensation to kin of the victims, forest officials are always at the receiving end. Besides, it also leads to revenge killing of wild animals at times and community outrage,” said Sunil Limaye, PCCF (wildlife), Maharashtra.

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CV volumes set to pick up as economy revives

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As per the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE)-2018, there are 312 tigers and 1,690 leopards in Maharashtra, a jump from 190 tigers and 905 leopards from 2014. This has led to increase in human-animal conflict with 88 persons being killed in wild animal attacks in 2020, and 57 in the last 8.5 months. This year, 3,185 cattle kill and 7,794 crop depredation cases were reported.

Limaye said, "We pursued a lot with the government to restore negative budgeting. In July, I personally met finance minister Ajit Pawar in Pune on the issue. He was convinced and agreed in principle to do the needful. Finally, the decision has been taken."

Pradeep Kumar, PCCF (budget, planning & development), said, "Now local officers will be able to pay compensation even if money is not there in the forest department account."

With increasing man-animal conflict, in 2019-20, the budget outlay for human and cattle kills and crop damage compensation was Rs40 crore. In 2020-21, Rs78 crore has been spent on this head.

"In 2021-22, considering the spurt in conflict, a provision of Rs80 crore was made. Out of this, we demanded Rs29 crore and received Rs20 crore, which has been distributed through the budget distribution system (BDS)," said Pradeep Kumar.

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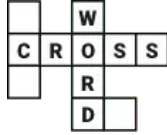
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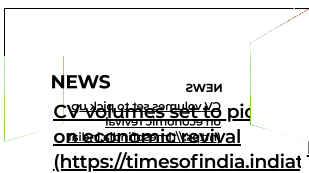


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THIS STORY IS FROM JULY 29, 2021

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Tigers to be biggest casualty if man-animal conflict flares up

Vijay Pinjarkar (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toireporter/author-Vijay-Pinjarkar-479164675.cms>) / TNN / Updated: Jul 29, 2021, 15:31 IST

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As per the All India Tiger & Leopard Estimation-2018, tiger number in Maharashtra has increased from 190 in 2014 to 312 in 2018 and to 350 now (Pic taken by Sameer Indapawar at Tadoba on March 24)

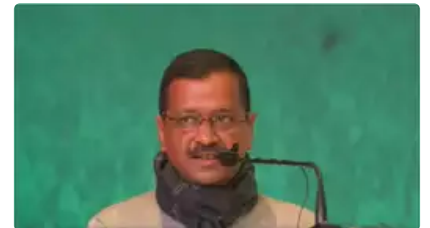
NAGPUR: Exactly a year ago when the country celebrated International Tiger Day, the number of the big cats had reported an increase from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,967 in 2018. But all is not well as tigers have been facing one of the greatest threats from human-animal conflict.

The figures speak for themselves in Maharashtra which is reeling under the worst-ever man-animal conflict. Since January 1, 2021, the state has recorded 44 human deaths. The state had recorded 88 deaths in 2020.

Of the 44 human deaths this year, Chandrapur-Gadchiroli districts alone have recorded 34 (93%) by tigers and leopards.

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"In Chandrapur district, 31 deaths were reported in just seven months. This is close to 33 deaths recorded in entire 2020. We can't rule out more such accidents till year-end," said chief conservator of forest (CCF) NR Praveen.

UP NEXT

Hydroelectric dam's draft facility holiday conflict those killed by wild animal

2018, tiger number in Maharashtra has increased from 190 in 2014 to 312 in 2018 and to 350 now. Similarly, leopard numbers have increased to 1,690, which is the third-largest in the country. Hence, an action plan is needed to contain the conflict.

The human-animal conflict has always created a political storm. Since 2013, subsequent governments have constituted at least three high-level committees of experts and senior officials to address the problem and crop depredation by wildlife.

According to Bandu Dhotre, a wildlife board member, the latest committee of state wildlife board (SWBL) members has submitted a report early this year "but action is pending on all these reports". "It is high time government implements recommendations to save wildlife species," he said.

Suresh Chopne, president, Green Planet Society, Chandrapur, warned that human-wildlife conflict often leads to people killing animals in self-defence or in retaliation, which can drive tigers and leopards to extinction.

Even the latest report by WWF & UNEP released on July 8 warned: "India faces an increasing challenge of human-wildlife conflict, which is driven by development pressures. With the world's second-largest human population along with the largest wild populations of tigers, Asian elephants, one-horned rhinos, Asiatic lions, and other globally threatened species, India faces urgent problems that must be addressed to achieve a socially just form of conservation."

On the directions of the Standing Committee of NBWL, two high-level committees under chief secretary at state-level and one under the district collectors have been set up in May 2021 to look

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into conflict, crop damage, cattle kills, and suggest measures.

This has apparently been done to seek better coordination between all the departments.

However, these panels are only on paper. Senior

UP NEXT

UP NEXT: Encroaching draft facilities, utility projects, conflicts those killed by wild animal

get much-needed support from other departments.

Admitting increase in conflict, PCCF (wildlife) Sunil Limaye said that it is because humans are encroaching upon wild territories. "Tackling man-animal conflict is not the job of the forest department alone. We need cooperation from other departments as well," he said.

Limaye stated that reports of both the committees will be put before the SBWL for approval soon. "Even if reports are pending, locals are being mobilized by way of capacity-building and winning their trust with timely compensation," he said.

PCCF (budget) Pradeep Kumar said that of the over Rs 29 crore that were to be paid towards conflict compensation that till last month, Rs20 crore have been released and plans are afoot to make of corpus of Rs30 crore.

Wildlife conservationist & Satpuda Foundation chief Kishor Rithe feels that existing and proposed linear projects like railways, highways, canals and transmission lines will continue to cause problems for dispersing wild-animal populations.

According to Rithe, encroachments on tiger habitats have become a serious issue in last five years. "There are massive encroachments recorded on tiger habitat and satellite imagery and forest department PORs (preliminary offence reports) together have proved that they are using Forest Rights Act (FRA) as a shield. In 2013, our committee on crop damage by wildlife had made several recommendations but these remain to be implemented," he said.

Wildlife enthusiast Dr Jerryl Banait said that tiger conservation has to come at the policy-making level.



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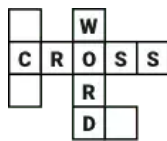
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The N95 mask, arguably the most essential and hygienic, has become a hot commodity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

longer a rare commodity, thanks to the return of Chinese imports and a resurgence in US domestic production.

But good luck buying them online or at big box retailers.

Consumers who try to purchase N95 masks, mainly on Amazon, are often led to vendors selling fake or poorly made KN95s, a Chinese-made mask that is often marketed as an N95 equivalent despite the lack of testing by U.S. regulators to confirm virus-filtering claims.

In fact, KN95 masks offered on Amazon and through other retailers are being sold without approval for use in health care settings from the Food and Drug Administration, which last July revoked its emergency use authorization for imported masks that lack approval from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — a category that includes all KN95s from China.

They include brands like Boncare, which is produced by a company that has repeatedly failed federal testing standards; Yotu, whose manufacturer has also failed European Union testing; and ChiSip, an Amazon top seller whose manufacturer, Chengde Technology, was cited by the CDC for falsely claiming approval by federal regulators.

All but a handful of the 50 bestselling KN95 masks on Amazon are plagued by similar problems, according to an analysis of sales data published by the marketing analytics firm Jungle Scout. Last month, companies that make or sell masks of dubious quality racked up almost \$34 million in sales.

“It’s really the Wild West out there with so many bad actors ripping people off,” said Anne Miller, executive director of Project N95, a nonprofit that

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connects people to bona fide personal protective equipment.

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High death toll: Encroaching humans, unhidden conflicts those killed by wild animal

ensure its policy is followed.

Experts say masks still matter, even amid rising vaccination rates. Case numbers in the United States have been increasing just as the nation is heading into winter and the holiday travel season. The discovery of a new variant, omicron, is a bracing reminder about the perils of complacency. Communities in Colorado, New York and California have reimposed mask mandates, and polls suggest that one-third of elementary-school-age children will most likely remain unvaccinated in the near future. Millions of people whose weakened immune systems can render vaccines ineffective continue to rely on masks for protection.

“There are a lot of things about Covid-19 we can’t control, like poor ventilation in buildings or whether other people are vaccinated, but aside from ensuring you and your family get vaccinated, wearing a high-quality mask is the single most important thing people can do to protect themselves and their kids,” said [Aaron Collins](#), a mechanical engineer with a background in aerosol science who has conducted performance tests on hundreds of masks he purchased online.

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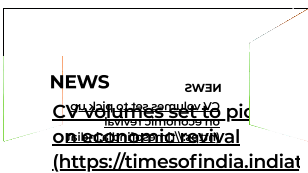
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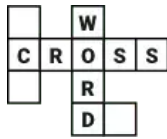
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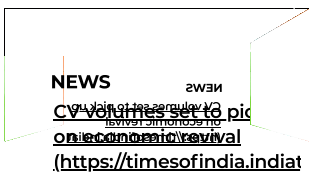
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