Seed Bombs: Solution to Man-Animal Conflict

Why in News

Odisha's Athagarh Forest Division has started **casting seed balls (or bombs)** inside different reserve forest areas to enrich food stock for wild elephants.

- This has been done to **prevent** man-elephant conflict.

    - On the eve of **World Elephant Day 2020**, the Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has launched a **portal on Human Elephant Conflict 'Surakhsya'.**
    - Further, the Government has taken initiative for fodder and water augmentation in forest areas so that animals get food and water in forest areas and not come outside. **LiDAR technology** is being used for the same.

Key Points

- Villagers who bear the brunt of the elephant attacks have come forward to prepare the bamboo seed balls and scatter them in 38 reserve forests under the Athagarh Forest Division.
- The **growth in bamboo plantations is expected to meet the needs of the elephants,** which often stray out of the forests and raid human habitations.
- Athagarh Forest Division is **one of the worst-hit areas** as far as man-elephant conflict is concerned.

    - Elephants frequently raid villages coming under Athagarh and Khuntuni range and damage standing paddy crops. Even fruit-bearing trees and vegetable plants are not spared.
    - The situation becomes extremely volatile when any human gets killed by elephants.
- In 2019, the division had thrown seed balls using 950 kg of bamboo seeds inside the forest. The survival rate ranged between 50-60%.

Seed Bomb

- A seed bomb is a **little ball generally made up of a combination of compost, clay and seeds.**

    - The compost and clay act as a carrier for the seeds so they can be launched over walls or fences and into inaccessible areas such as wasteland or railways.
    - The **compost offers nutrients** for the seeds to germinate and grow strong during their infancy and the **clay binds the seed bomb,** making it hard enough not to break when it hits the ground.
- It is used in **re-vegetation and reforestation** of the fragile ecosystems.
- The plantation technique wherein seed balls are sprayed using aerial devices, including planes, helicopters or drones, is known as **aerial seeding**.
- **Recent Initiatives:**

    - **Udaipur** has been chosen for experimenting the seed bombing technique to increase forest cover in Rajasthan.
    - The **Haryana government** has employed aerial seeding techniques to improve green

cover in the **Aravalli** area of the State.

MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICTS

98 Deaths due to tiger attacks from 2013-14 to 2016-17

2,804 Deaths due to elephant attacks from 2009-10 to 2015-16

₹15cr Money spent on conflict mitigation (2013-14 to 2016-17)

STEPS TAKEN TO MITIGATE CONFLICT

584km of elephant-proof trenches

1,501km of solar-powered fences

35km of elephant-proof walls

3.5km of stone-pitched trenches

259km of boundary walls and 43km of bio-fences

> There are locations, where elephant-proof trenches, walls and solar-powered fences exist in parallel
> — Expert report on human-wildlife conflict mitigation

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Way Forward

- India has a large population of the **tiger**, Asian elephant, leopard, sloth bear, **gaur** and many others. Keeping these animals restricted to a few hundred kilometers of protected areas can be difficult. Thus, coordinated and collaborative conservation actions are required to motivate **communities to shift from conflict to coexistence with wildlife.**
- **Inclusive development** with a long-term vision that cares for the environment is a solution to man-animal conflict.

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