

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper3- ecology and environment- Conservation.
Evolution of wildlife laws and its impact- A look at Project Tiger, 50 years on

Project Tiger, initiated in 1973, has been a cornerstone in the conservation efforts for the endangered tiger population in India. This project, launched at a critical time when the tiger population was rapidly declining due to hunting and habitat loss, has led to the establishment of numerous tiger reserves across the country. The legal framework supporting wildlife conservation has evolved over the years, encompassing key legislations such as the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, amendments in 2006, and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 (FRA).

Key Legal Evolution:

- 1. 1972 Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA):**
 - Establishment of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
 - Identification of Critical Tiger Habitats (CTHs) or core areas of tiger reserves.
- 2. Project Tiger (1973):**
 - Launched in response to declining tiger population.
 - Creation of tiger reserves.
- 3. 2006 Amendment of WLPA:**
 - Formation of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).
 - Introduction of tiger conservation plans modifying rights of forest-dwellers.
- 4. Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 (FRA):**
 - Recognition of forest-dweller rights in tiger reserves.
 - Establishment of Gram Sabhas for forest management.
- 5. Introduction of Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH) under FRA:**
 - Different from CTH under WLPA, CWH once notified prevents diversion of land for non-forest purposes.
- 6. Notification of FRA Rules (2009) and Challenges:**
 - Issues arising from the NTCA's rush to delineate CTHs without full compliance with WLPA provisions.
- 7. Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 (LARR Act):**
 - Mandates fair compensation and rehabilitation for relocated people.

Implications of Legal Changes:

- 1. Expansion of Tiger Reserves:**
 - From nine reserves in 1973 to 54 in 2022, covering 78,135.956 sq. km across 18 states.
- 2. Increase in Tiger Population:**
 - Due to enhanced protection, tiger numbers rose to 3,167-3,925 by 2022.
- 3. Challenges in Implementing FRA:**
 - Implementation issues leading to disputes over land use in tiger reserves.
- 4. Relocation and Rehabilitation Challenges:**
 - Challenges in ensuring fair compensation and transparent relocation processes.
- 5. Conflict with NTCA Directives:**
 - Conflicts between NTCA directives for delineating CTHs and FRA provisions.
- 6. Fixed Compensation Concerns:**
 - Fixed compensation of ₹15 lakh not fully covering legal requirements for compensation, resettlement, and relocation under LARR Act.

Recommendations:

1. Respectful and Informed Relocation:

- Implement relocation policies as per the LARR Act, ensuring voluntariness, informed decisions, and fair compensation.

2. Proactive Conflict Resolution:

- Develop strategies to proactively address and resolve conflicts arising from tiger reserve expansion, balancing conservation needs with local community rights.

Project Tiger, despite its successes in tiger conservation, needs to navigate the delicate balance between protecting wildlife and respecting the rights of forest-dwelling communities. Adopting transparent and inclusive policies is crucial for sustainable conservation efforts.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 3 Indian Economy – Infrastructure: Airports.

On Regulations on Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) – The right flight path

The recent changes in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) regulations on flight duty time limitations (FDTL) bring about several noteworthy provisions and potential challenges in their implementation.

Key Provisions of the New Norms:

1. Extended Rest Periods:

- Weekly rest periods increased to 48 hours from the previous 36.

2. Shorter Night Duty Hours:

- Introduces shorter night duty hours for pilots.

3. Reduced Night Landings:

- Night landings limited to 2, down from the previous allowance of 6.

4. Mandatory Quarterly Fatigue Reports:

- Airlines mandated to submit quarterly "fatigue reports" to address and monitor pilot fatigue.

Need for the New Norms:

1. Increasing Workload:

- India's rapidly growing aviation market and congested major airports necessitate stricter regulations to manage increasing workload.

2. Addressing Pilot Fatigue:

- In an intensely competitive and low-margin industry, pilots often report ignored complaints of fatigue. The new rules aim to prevent fatigue-related concerns from evolving into safety crises.

3. Alignment with Global Standards:

- India's previous FDTL regulations were considered subpar. The new norms bring the country closer to global standards in aviation safety.

4. Lack of Pilot's Union Representation:

- Except for Air India, no airline has a pilot's union to negotiate concerns related to fatigue and duty hours with managements.

Potential Issues with Implementation:

1. Increased Costs for Airlines:

- The new norms may lead to additional hiring of pilots to ensure compliance. Given the existing shortage of pilots, this could significantly raise operational costs for airlines.

2. Reluctance in Reporting Fatigue:

- Pilots may be hesitant to file fatigue reports due to concerns about potential repercussions, such as being deprived of flying allowances, which constitute a substantial portion of their earnings.

While the new regulations aim to enhance safety standards in the aviation sector, their effective implementation requires a delicate balance between addressing pilot fatigue concerns and managing the financial implications for airline companies.