Bandipur Tiger Reserve: Eco-sensitive zones and wildlife tourism

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Prelims: Bandipur, Project Tiger, protected areas; Mains: GS-III biodiversity and conservation



Original symbolic illustration: pcsmantra.com

Why in the news

Suspicion of an illegal safari in Bandipur Tiger Reserve's eco-sensitive zone has renewed discussion of tourism regulation around protected areas. Photographs or allegations do not themselves establish an offence. Separately from the alleged incident, the reserve's geography and management provide useful exam context.

Location and landscape

Bandipur is in Karnataka and belongs to the wider forest landscape at the junction of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Nearby protected forests include Nagarhole, Wayanad and Mudumalai. Connected landscapes support wildlife movement and require inter-State coordination. A broad biosphere landscape and an individual national park within it do not have identical legal identities.

Project Tiger context

Government of India and Wildlife Institute of India accounts identify Bandipur among the first nine tiger reserves included when Project Tiger began in 1973. The programme's launch and separate national-park notification dates should not be conflated.

Management challenges

The WII assessment identifies changing surrounding land use, human-wildlife conflict, roads, invasive plants and forest fires among the challenges. Activities outside a forest boundary can affect conservation. Protecting only the core is therefore insufficient; surrounding uses, transport and livelihoods also need coordination.

Understanding an eco-sensitive zone

The WII page records notification of Bandipur's ESZ on 4 October 2012. Whether an activity is prohibited, regulated or allowed requires checking the relevant notification and permissions. An ESZ is neither an automatic ban on every human activity nor blanket permission for commercial tourism.

Mains use

Tourism may provide conservation resources and local employment, while also increasing traffic, noise and construction pressure. Clear permissions, monitoring and community participation are useful policy considerations. Conclusions about a particular alleged incident should await competent investigation.

Prelims practice question

Consider the following statements:

Statement-I: Bandipur was among the initial nine tiger reserves under Project Tiger.

Statement-II: An ESZ designation automatically permits every type of commercial safari.

Choose the correct option:

(a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I

(b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, but Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I

(c) Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect

(d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct

▼ **Answer and explanation**

Correct answer: **(c)**. Legality depends on the applicable rules and permission.

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Sources

https://mee-tr.wii.gov.in/Home/Geospatial/bandipur-tiger-reserve
https://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=61370
Source status: geography and conservation context use official sources. The safari news hook remains an unverified allegation.

Frequently asked questions

Where is Bandipur Tiger Reserve and why does its landscape matter?

Bandipur is in Karnataka and belongs to the wider forest landscape at the junction of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which includes protected forests such as Nagarhole, Wayanad and Mudumalai. Such connected landscapes support wildlife movement and require inter-State conservation coordination. Source (https://mee-tr.wii.gov.in/Home/Geospatial/bandipur-tiger-reserve)

What is Bandipur's connection with Project Tiger?

Government of India and Wildlife Institute of India accounts identify Bandipur among the first nine tiger reserves included when Project Tiger began in 1973. The programme's launch date and the separate national-park notification dates are not the same. Source (https://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=61370)

When was Bandipur's eco-sensitive zone notified, and what does an ESZ mean?

The WII page records notification of Bandipur's ESZ on 4 October 2012. Whether an activity is prohibited, regulated or allowed in an ESZ depends on the relevant notification and permissions; an ESZ is neither an automatic ban on all activity nor blanket permission for commercial tourism. The alleged safari remains an unverified allegation. Source (https://mee-tr.wii.gov.in/Home/Geospatial/bandipur-tiger-reserve)

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