

12– 08 – 2022

News: Pinarayi Cabinet approves Forest Dept. plan on eco zones

- The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposals put forward by the State Forest Department to fully exclude the human habitation, agricultural holdings and public and government institutions from the ambit of the Ecologically Sensitive Zones around the 23 protected areas in the State.

Eco Sensitive Zones

- Eco-Sensitive Zones or Ecologically Fragile Areas **are areas within 10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.**
- These are protected areas that act as “**shock absorbers**”. They also act as **transition zones.**
- There are **no central acts** to govern the zone as **land is a state subject.**
- ESZs are **notified by MoEFCC, Government of India under Environment Protection Act 1986.**
- In case of **places with sensitive corridors, connectivity and ecologically important patches, crucial for landscape linkage, even area beyond 10 km width can also be included in the eco-sensitive zone.**

- The basic aim is to **regulate certain activities** around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimise the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

Prohibited activities

- Commercial mining, saw mills, industries causing pollution (air, water, soil, noise etc.), establishment of major hydroelectric projects (HEP), commercial use of wood, Tourism activities like hot-air balloons over the National Park, discharge of effluents or any solid waste or production of hazardous substances.

Regulated activities

- Felling of trees, establishment of hotels and resorts, commercial use of natural water, erection of electrical cables, movement of vehicular traffic, groundwater harvesting, drastic change of agriculture system, e.g. adoption of heavy technology, pesticides etc., widening of roads.

Permitted activities

- Ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, use of renewable energy sources, and adoption of green technology for all activities.

News: Tiger Range Countries

- India has hosted the Pre-Summit meeting of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs).
- The Tiger Range Countries Summit is scheduled to be held at Vladivostok, Russia on 5th September 2022.

Highlights of the Meeting

- The meeting was attended by 11 tiger range countries except for China and Indonesia.
- There are 13 Tiger Range Countries (TRC): India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR (People's Democratic Republic), Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, Viet Nam, China and Indonesia.
- India is committed to bringing all potential tiger habitats within the country under the tiger reserve network.
- The meeting aims to finalise the declaration on tiger conservation to be adopted at the Summit.

Significance of Tiger Conservation

Vital in Regulating Ecological Processes

- Tigers, the top predators in the ecosystem, are vital in regulating and perpetuating ecological processes.

- Forests are known to provide ecological services like **clean air, water, pollination, temperature regulation** etc.

Maintaining Food Chain

- Tiger is a **top predator which is at the apex of the food chain and keeps the population of wild ungulates** (primarily large mammals) in check.
- Thus, Tiger helps in maintaining the balance between prey herbivores and the vegetation upon which they feed.

News: Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs)

- In July 2022, **Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs)** witnessed a net outflow of **Rs 457 crore as investors parked their money in other asset** classes as part of their portfolio rebalancing strategy.

Gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF)

- The Gold Exchange Traded Fund (Gold ETF) is an **exchange-traded fund (ETF)** **can be bought and sold on stock exchanges** thus saving you the trouble of keeping physical gold.
- Gold ETFs are **essentially open-ended mutual fund schemes which are based on ever-fluctuating gold prices.**

- Unlike with jewellery, coins, and bars which come with high initial buying and selling charges, the **gold ETF costs much lower**.
- **Transparency in pricing** is another advantage.
- The **price at which it is bought is probably the closest to the actual price of gold**, and therefore, the benchmark is the physical gold price.
- As compared to physical gold which is idle wealth, **gold ETF is a form of investment that provides returns and can be used to meet short-term as well as long-term financial goals**.
- Gold ETFs come with **no risk and are not required to be stored**.
- Gold ETFs are **treated as non-equity investments and taxed accordingly**.
- Short-term capital gains on units held for less than 36 months will be added to investor's income and taxed as per the applicable slab rate.
- Long term capital gains on units held for more than 36 months will be taxed at 20% after providing for indexation.
- **Gold ETFs do not incur Exit Load, Entry Load, Wealth Tax, Security Transaction Tax, VAT, or Sales Tax**.

Advantages

- There is **complete transparency** on the holdings of an ETF.

- Gold ETFs have much lower expenses as compared to physical gold investments.
- No wealth tax, no security transaction tax, no VAT and no sales tax is levied on ETFs.
- There is no fear of theft as ETFs are safe and secure as units held in Demat Account of the holder.