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Pulicat Lake - Confusion in the name of law

- As per the instructions of Wildlife Conservation Scheme 2002 and National Environment Policy 2006, 10 km from the boundary of protected areas like National Park, Sanctuaries etc. should be declared as Eco Sensitive Zone as per Environment Protection Act 1986.
- This is an important initiative to protect the ecological welfare of the areas.
- Many states raised objections that it will affect many development projects.
- The National Wildlife Board has announced that states can demarcate the boundaries of ecologically sensitive zones as per their respective protected areas.
- 10 km from the boundaries such areas are naturally considered ecologically sensitive zones.
- Accordingly, prohibited, regulated and permitted activities are defined in the landscape there.
- Mines, lumber mills, factories causing air, water, noise, land pollution, hydroelectric projects, manufacturing of hazardous materials. Discharge of waste into water bodies- land etc. is strictly prohibited.
- Felling of trees, construction of restaurants/hostels, use of other water sources including ground water etc. are regulated.

Pulicat Lake/Bird Sanctuary

- Pulicat Lake in Tamil Nadu-East of Andhra Pradesh is a coastal lake with integrated socio-economic importance based on ecological fishing.
- This lake has been standing for over 600 years. It is facing various threats.
- The density of its undulating forests is shrinking. The polluting activities of large scale commercial shrimp farms, water and soil exploitation along with the current infrastructural development of the country in the name of creating employment for local people. Environmental-social and economic impacts are important among them.
- As the lake is home to many species of wading birds, it was declared by the Tamil Nadu government in 1980 as the Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- After declaring an area as a sanctuary, the district administration, including the forest department, has to carry out some important procedures.
- Accordingly, to define the boundaries of the sanctuary decisively, to resolve the doubts about the land rights of the people of the area. It is necessary to carry out procedures such as demarcation of ecological sensitivity zones.
- But till date only some adjacent areas of the sanctuary and 13 villages have been defined as its approximate boundaries.

Why were regulations not followed?

- Pulicat lake was declared a bird sanctuary in 1998 in the Tiruvallur District Gazetteer, 18 years after it was declared a bird sanctuary.
- However, it seems that the forest department and the district administration have not carried out the important procedures to be followed.
- Procedures related to land rights of the people within the sanctuary area to demarcate definitive boundaries have not yet been completed.
- Thus, 10 km from the sanctuary boundary. The above areas are ecologically sensitive zones. Due to this, there is an environment where it is not possible to implement big projects that do not have an environmental impact.

Changes

- There are plans for an industrial park and construction of certain industries causing excessive pollution under the red category of Pollution Control Board in the ecological focus zone of Pulicat lake bird sanctuary.
- Following this, on the recommendation of the State Wildlife Board, the National Wildlife Board approved the works and demarcated the critical area of Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary to define the ecological sensitivity zone boundary.

China's military drills around Taiwan

- The drill is a rehearsal for measures to punish Taiwan's separatism
- Also, it is conducted to warn foreign powers that may interfere in the matter as Taiwan is one of China's internal affairs.
- Since the end of the civil war in 1949, Taiwan has been an independent territory.
- However, China considers the island as a part of their country. Taiwan has also not yet declared itself as a separate country.
- China claims it has the right to annex Taiwan at any time.
- China says it can use military force if necessary.
- In this context, China strongly opposes foreign leaders or dignitaries, including the United States, coming to the region to recognize Taiwan as a separate country.
- China has been conducting military drills around Taiwan to signal its opposition.