



MoEFCC Reverses Decision to Merge Autonomous Bodies

For Prelims: Forest Survey of India, National Tiger Conservation Authority, [Wildlife Crime Control Bureau](#), [Central Zoo Authority](#), [Project Tiger](#), [Project Elephant](#), [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#).

For Mains: Environmental Conservation Organizations and Related Concerns.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the [Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change \(MoEFCC\)](#) reversed its decision to **establish integrated regional offices** by merging key environmental bodies under its umbrella.

What was the Initial Proposal of the MoEFCC?

▪ Proposal:

- The initial plan, announced during the Covid-19 lockdown, aimed to bring together the **Forest Survey of India (FSI)**, the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, the [Wildlife Crime Control Bureau \(WCCB\)](#), and the [Central Zoo Authority \(CZA\)](#) under a unified structure.
 - This move was intended to streamline operations and create a single point of authority for these organizations.

▪ Criticisms:

- It would **undermine the independence and authority of these bodies**, which have different mandates and roles in environmental governance.
- It would **create administrative confusion and chaos**, as these bodies have different reporting structures and jurisdictions.
- It would **compromise the quality and credibility of their work**, as they would be **subject to political interference and pressure from the MoEFCC**.
- It would **dilute the focus and expertise of these bodies**, which have specialised functions and skills in their respective domains.

▪ Reversal of Decision:

- The recent notification from the MoEFCC **not only scrapped the merger plan but suggests rearranging the current regional offices**, and this plan is also facing criticism.
 - For instance, the Bengaluru regional office would have had jurisdiction of three states and a Union Territory with different geography and environment: **Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, and Lakshadweep**.
 - Concerns were also raised over the recent plan to merge [Project Tiger](#) and [Project Elephant](#), potentially affecting the autonomy and importance of these initiatives.

Environment Bodies	Features
Forest Survey of India(FSI):	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ It is a government agency responsible for conducting forest surveys, assessments, and

	<p>related research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FSI replaced the "Pre-investment Survey of Forest Resources" (PISFR), an initiative initiated by the Indian government in 1965, with assistance from the FAO and the UNDP. India State of Forest Report (ISFR) is a biennial publication of FSI.
National Tiger Conservation Authority:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a statutory body established under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in December 2005, following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force. It is responsible for managing Project Tiger and India's Tiger Reserves. The Union Environment Minister is the Chairperson of NTCA and the State Environment Minister is the Vice-Chairperson.
Wildlife Crime Control Bureau:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a statutory multi-disciplinary body (WPA 1972) established to combat organized wildlife crime in the country. The Bureau has its headquarters in New Delhi. It advise the Government of India on issues relating to wildlife crimes having national and international ramifications, relevant policy and laws. It also assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act, CITES and EXIM Policy governing such an item.
Central Zoo Authority:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is also a statutory body (WPA 1972) to regulate and monitor the functioning of zoos in India and ensure their compliance with the standards and norms prescribed by it. Apart from the primary function of grant of recognition, the CZA also regulates the exchange of animals of endangered category listed under Schedule- I and II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 among zoos. The Environment Minister is the chairperson of CZA.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Among the following Tiger Reserves, which one has the largest area under "Critical Tiger Habitat"? (2020)

- (a) Corbett
- (b) Ranthambore
- (c) Nagarjunasagar-Srisaillam
- (d) Sundarbans

Ans: (c)

Mains:

Q. “Policy contradictions among various competing sectors and stakeholders have resulted in inadequate ‘protection and prevention of degradation’ to environment.” Comment with relevant illustrations. **(2018)**

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