

New Coastal Regulation Zone Notification

Why in News?

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The union cabinet has approved amendments to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification.

\nWhat is Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) about?

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- Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, issued the Coastal Regulation Zone notification for regulation of activities in the coastal area.

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- As per the notification, the coastal land up to 500m from the High Tide Line (HTL) and a stage of 100m along banks of creeks, estuaries, backwater and rivers subject to tidal fluctuations, is called the Coastal Regulation Zone(CRZ).

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- CRZ along the country has been placed in four categories, which are as follows

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- **CRZ I - Ecologically Sensitive Areas.**

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- They lie between low and high tide line.

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- Exploration of natural gas and extraction of salt are permitted

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- **CRZ II - Shore Line Areas**

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- The areas that have been developed up to or close to the shoreline.

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- Unauthorized structures are not allowed to construct in this zone.

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- **CRZ III - Undisturbed Area**

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- Rural and Urban localities which fall outside I and II.

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- Only certain activities related to agriculture even some public facilities are allowed in this zone.
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- **CRZ IV - Territorial Area**
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- An area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 Nautical Miles seaward.
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- Fishing and allied activities are permitted in this zone.
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- Solid waste should be let off in this zone.
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What are the recent changes in the CRZ notification?

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- Union government made significant relaxation of development controls along the coastline through the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2018.
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- **CRZ-II Urban** - The CRZ-II urban category, as per the CRZ notification of 2011, pertains to areas “that have been developed up to or close to the shoreline”, and are legally designated municipal limits already provided with roads, water supply, sewerage connections and so on.
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- Under the new notification, the decision has been taken to permit current Floor Space Index (FSI) or Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in urban areas coming under CRZ-II which governs the size of buildings.
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- This does away with the restrictions on construction which date back to the Development Control Rules of 1991.
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- **CRZ- III Rural** - For rural areas, the newly approved notification adds a sub-category to CRZ-III.
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- The new provision, CRZ-III A, applies development restrictions to a much smaller area of 50 meters from the high tide line, compared to the 200 meters that were earmarked as the no development zone (NDZ) earlier for densely populated areas.
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- These are defined as places with a population of 2,161 per sq km as per the 2011 Census.

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- Areas with a population density below that will continue to have 200 meters as the NDZ (No-Developmental Zone)

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What are the changes made to the regulatory framework?

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- The system of granting clearances has also been changed. States will have the authority to approve proposals for urban (CRZ-II) and rural (CRZ-III) areas.

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- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change will grant clearances for ecologically sensitive areas (CRZ-I), and areas falling between the low tide line and 12 nautical miles seaward.

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- The modifications also include demarcation of a 20-metre no development zone for all islands and guidelines to deal with sensitive areas.

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What is the significance of the move?

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- The notification aims to encourage the construction of buildings and launch tourism activities in areas that are closer to the high tide line.

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- The government has taken the view that both affordable housing availability and tourism will grow if restrictions on coastal zones are relaxed.

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- However, for tourism expansion, the new scheme will allow temporary facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks and changing rooms, maintaining only a slim margin of 10 meters from the high tide line.

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What are a few issues with the plan?

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- When the draft of the new CRZ notification was published in 2018, concerns were raised that it ignored two major issues:

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1. Maintaining a well-demarcated hazard line,
2. Factoring in the effects of climate change on sea levels.

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- The disastrous impacts of periodic cyclones show that coastlines will become even more vulnerable.
- Protection of fishers poses a challenge since the relaxation of development controls could subject them to severe commercial pressures.
- The decision to allow construction and tourist facilities closer to the coast may boost employment and grow local business, but without strong environmental safeguards, these could damage fragile ecosystems.

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Source: The Hindu, Live Mint

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