



Buried in the sands

This article is related to General Studies-Paper III (Environment & Ecology).

The Hindu

Writer - Sujatha Byravan (scientist), Aarthi Sridhar (Trustee, Dakshin Foundation)

23 Jan., 2019

The new CRZ notification of 2018 now reads as a rejection of science and the anticipated impacts from climate change.

In late December, the government approved the Draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018, which had been earlier circulated by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF-CC). The CRZ consists of designated areas along the coast that are regulated by the government. The government introduced the new CRZ 2018 notification as a promise of a 'better life' for coastal communities that would add value to the country's economy. Various recommendations to the draft from research think tanks and coastal community groups during the year were largely ignored and consultation appears to have been limited to select government bodies and departments.

History and changes

CRZ regulations were first introduced in 1991 and subsequently revised in 2011. A coastal hazard line was established taking into account natural disasters including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. While the 2011 notification recognised that there were areas of high erosion and vulnerability along the coast, few attempts were made to develop this hazard line scientifically or transparently across the country to regulate development. One amendment, in July 2018, removed the hazard line from the main regulation without consulting the public. In the new 2018 notification, as well, all reference to a hazard line has been removed and is replaced with a fixed setback line.

Some areas along the coast, for example, experience very high storm surges, but will not get the protection they deserve. Formerly (in the 2011 version), the CRZ extended up to a minimum of 500 m and up to the area of the 'hazard line' if it was found to be beyond 500 m. By removing the hazard line altogether, the new notification maintains a uniform CRZ of 500 m from the high tide line. Except for the most ecologically sensitive areas (CRZ-I) and water areas (CRZ-IV), for which any development clearance requires MoEFCC approval, State governments will be responsible for regulating urban and rural coastal areas (CRZ-II and III). The CRZ for land adjoining creeks and backwaters is reduced from 100 to 50 m. CRZ 2018 relaxes important restrictions and permits construction in urban CRZ zones and densely populated rural coastal areas. Rural areas have been bifurcated, with greater allowances, ironically, for more populated areas. The greatest number of relaxations has been accorded to hotels, resorts and the tourism sector.

Boost to business

Big hotels, restaurants, houses, coastal highways and small and large port facilities can now be built closer to the shoreline. Increased coastal tourism translates into further destruction of lagoons, marshland and other coastal ecosystems and their services. In fact, a limited study of the Tamil Nadu coastal districts from 2009 found that lakhs of crores of public investment, ecosystems and land are at risk from a one metre rise in average sea levels.

The cyclones Ockhi and Vardah are fresh in people's memories and so is the experience of loss of life and property. These frequent weather-related coastal vulnerabilities are, however, omitted in the CRZ 2018, which moved the concept of vulnerability and the hazard line from being at the heart of the regulatory mechanism to an optional appendage in the law applicable for a vaguely worded section on 'disaster management'. The document trims the list of restricted activities in the ecologically sensitive CRZ-I areas and erases baselines. These include original baselines of what constituted this coastal zone (where it begins and ends, based on high water marks), what makes for a violation and further, what action should be taken for violations thus far and



in future. Meanwhile, shorelines are already eroding due to sand mining controlled by mafias and building of seawalls along the coast.

At our peril

At the recent international climate meeting at Katowice (COP24), when the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Russia refused to “accept” the special 1.5 degrees report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), India and other developing countries rightly protested that these countries were placing the world at risk. That report called for the world to prepare for severe impacts from climate change if average global temperature was to rise above 1.5° Celsius. The effects from rising seas are already visible and will worsen as temperature rises. Countries need to prepare for an increase in the frequency and intensity of very severe storms and accompanying effects on their coasts. An earlier 2018 study published in Nature Climate Change deduced that, among all countries of the world, India would experience the worst social and economic impacts from climate change.

The CRZ notification from the Cabinet, however, now reads as a rejection of the IPCC’s science and anticipated impacts from climate change, including the 1.5° Celsius report. It is not clear whose interests are being heard in this CRZ notification. This environmental legislation has seen repeated fiddling with its provisions (the 1991 version saw about 25 amendments) and regular overhauls (the 2018 version makes for three fresh re-introductions of this law). Little of this activity from the MoEFCC has been towards improving or implementing the law, but rather to reduce regulatory oversight.

The regulation now moves into another era, while existing deadlines to identify violations and phase out sewage and waste disposal and make wholesome management plans lapse. The legal mechanisms and innovations that entered the CRZ lexicon in the wake of the 2004 tsunami and coastal vulnerabilities to climate change have been deleted from the CRZ 2018. In one fell swoop, about two decades of deliberation and action to secure the coasts for the nation’s citizens has been erased. With eyes wide open, the country is walking into disaster for its coast and the tens of millions who live on it.

GS World Team

Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018

Why in the discussion?

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018, to control the economic and development activities in the coastal areas according to environmental standards.
- The point to be noted is that the previous review of this notification was done in 2011 and then it was released the same year.

Background

- Keeping in view the objective of conservation and protection of coastal areas, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had issued the Coastal Regulation Zone notification in 1991, which was revised in 2011.
- From time to time, the paragraphs of the Coastal Regulation Zone-CRZ notification have been amended.
- Considering the numerous memoranda received by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, for comprehensive review of the provisions related to the provisions of 2011, especially the management and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystem, development of coastal areas, ecological tourism, livelihood

related options of coastal communities and sustainable development etc. steps like CRZ Notification, 2018 have been taken

What is it?

- CRZ was notified in February -1991 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (now named as Environment, Forest and Climate Change) under 'Environment Protection Act, 1986'.
- Its main objective is to regulate activities in sensitive coastal areas of the country.
- The area of the coastal area up to 500 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL), as well as the edges of the bays, aschuries, backwater and rivers, is considered to be CRZ region, but the oceans are not included in it.
- Under this coastal areas have been divided into four parts-
 - CRZ - 1**
 - It is an ecologically sensitive area between low and high tide lines, which maintains coastal ecosystem.
 - CRZ - 2**
 - This area is spread to the edge of the coast.
 - CRZ - 3**
 - It covers the external rural and urban areas of CRZ 1 and 2. In this area, certain activities related to agriculture have been allowed to be done.



4. CRZ - 4

- It extends to the territorial limits in the aquatic region. Activities such as fisheries are allowed in this area.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Shailesh Nayak (Secretary in the Ministry of Earth Sciences) in June 2014, to recommend suitable changes in the CRZ Notification 2011, the coastal states / UTs and Besides the concerns of other stakeholders, the responsibility for considering various issues was entrusted.

Benefit

- The proposed CRZ notification, activities in coastal areas will increase significantly from 2018, which will result in faster growth of economic growth.
- Simultaneously, the principles of conservation of coastal areas will also be taken into consideration. This will not only create large numbers of jobs, but also do as value addition in India's economy

along with bettering life will be ensured. As the new notification lowers hypersensitivity in the coastal areas, they are also expected to be restored.

Key features

- According to current standards in CRZ areas, floor space index (FSI) or floor area ratio (FAR) will be allowed. More opportunities will be provided for the development of densely populated areas.
- For infrastructure, infrastructure related to tourism will be encouraged. The process of CRZ approval has been streamlined. For all islands, no development zone (NDZ) of 20 meters has been specified.
- All issues considered ecologically sensitive are given special significance. reducing pollution has been especially focused. Defense and strategic projects have been given the necessary exemption. Two new categories, CRZ-3A and CRZ-3B have been set for rural areas with densely populated population.

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. Consider the following statements -

1. Coastal Regulation zone was notified in 1991 by the Ministry of Environment and Forest under Environment Protection Act, 1986.
2. Its main objective is to regulate the activities in the sensitive Coastal regions of the country.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- (a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. How Coastal Regulation zone notification, 2018 will be effective in environmental development, ecosystem, tourism, Coastal community and sustainable development? Review.

(250 Words)

Note: Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 22 Jan. is 1(c)