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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Cabinet approves new norms for rural, coastal tourism infra

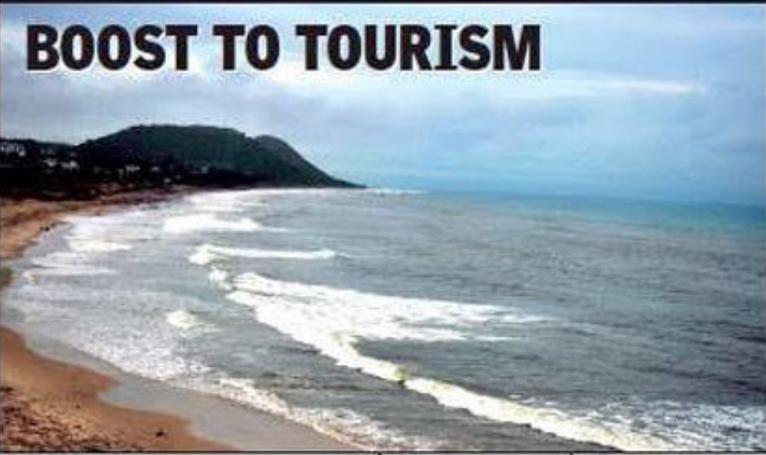
TNN | Dec 28, 2018, 06.52 PM IST



NEW DELHI: The Centre has approved new norms to regulate development activities in coastal zones along India's over 7,500 km of coastline, streamlining Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance procedures and allowing development activities in coastal rural areas and temporary tourism facilities in beaches.

Besides, a 'No Development Zone' (NDZ) of 20 meters is earmarked for all Islands close to the mainland coast and for all backwater islands in the mainland.

Under new norms, coastal zones along rural areas will be bifurcated, based on population density, to regulate development activities. These changes will promote eco-tourism activities in identified stretches, subject to permissions, and address livelihood concerns of certain local communities in rural coastal zones.

<p> > De-freeze 'Floor Area Ratio' for construction projects in CRZ-II (urban) areas</p> <p>> (It'll enable redevelopment of these areas to meet emerging needs, subject to local town and country planning regulations)</p> <hr/> <p>> Treatment facilities have been made permissible activities in CRZ-I (urban) areas, subject to necessary safeguards, to address pollution in coastal areas</p> <p>> A 'No Development Zone' of 20 meters from High Tide Line has been stipulated for all islands</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">BOOST TO TOURISM</h2> 	
<p>> Temporary tourism facilities (shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms and drinking water facilities) have now been permitted on beaches</p> <p></p>	<p>> CRZ clearances streamlined More powers to state-level authorities</p>	<p>> Densely populated rural areas to be opened up for development activities</p>

Though the government on Friday claimed that the move will lead to enhanced activities in the coastal regions thereby promoting economic growth while also respecting the conservation principles of coastal regions, environmentalists said that the new CRZ norms will open up fragile inter-tidal areas to real estate agents and promote commercialisation of the coast at the cost of fishing community.

Rakesh Mundy

COAST CUTTER





CLASSIFICATION	BIGGEST TAKEAWAY FOR TOURISM
<p>CRZ I Ecologically sensitive areas like sanctuaries, reserve forests, mangroves, coral reefs and turtle-nesting grounds that could be inundated due to rise in sea level</p>	<p>> With the freeze on constructions along the coastal zone more or less lifted, the tourism sector will be the biggest beneficiary</p>
<p>CRZ II Areas which have already been developed up to the shoreline within municipal limits</p>	<p>> Toilets, changing rooms, drinking water facilities and temporary shacks can be constructed even on beaches</p>
<p>CRZ III A Areas with a population of more than 2,161 per sqkm. Here, 50m from high tide will be no-development zone (NDZ)</p>	<p>> Existing residential buildings can be converted into homestays without increasing the plinth area</p>
<p>CRZ III B Areas with less population. Here, areas up to 200m from the HTL on the landward side will be earmarked as NDZ</p>	<p>> CRZ will not be a bar for public utilities like roads, even if they pass through mangrove forests</p> <p>> Introduction of CRZ-III into A and B clauses will address state's main concern of issuing permission to dwelling units as well</p>

“The coastline is already vulnerable due to erosion, fresh water crisis and loss of livelihoods. The new changes will only

increase this vulnerability and promote commercialisation of the coast. The reduced 'no development zones' in island areas clearly speaks to the tourism and shipping-led commercialisation of Andaman & Nicobar Islands," said KanchiKohli, environment campaigner and researcher with the Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

Referring to new norms, the Union environment ministry, in its statement, however, said, "It will not only result in significant employment generation but also to a better life and add value to the economy of India. The new notification is expected to rejuvenate the coastal areas while reducing their vulnerabilities."

The approval to the CRZ Notification, 2018 was granted by the Union cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Thursday. The environment ministry had in April come out with its draft notification, seeking views of stakeholders. The final version of it, incorporating certain views of experts and local communities, was then placed before the Cabinet for approval.

As per CRZ, 2011 Notification, Floor Space Index (FSI) or the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for CRZ-II (urban) areas had been frozen as per 1991 Development Control Regulation (DCR) levels. In the CRZ, 2018 Notification, it has, however, been decided to de-freeze the same and permit FSI for construction projects, as prevailing on the date of the new notification.

"This will enable redevelopment of these areas to meet the emerging needs," said the ministry.

The relaxations proposed in the CRZ Notification, 2018 will, however, come into force only after the states revise or update their respective Coastal Zone Management Programmes (CZMP) under the new norms. Currently, activities in coastal zones are regulated by the CRZ notification of 2011.

Under the new norms, the High Tide Line (HTL) has been demarcated by the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) and will be taken as a universal standard for the HTL for all regulatory purposes under the CRZ Notification, 2018.

On the other hand, the Hazard Line's mapping has been carried out by the Survey of India. The Hazard Line has, however, been de-linked from the CRZ regulatory regime and will be used only as a tool for disaster management and planning of adaptive and mitigation measures.

The new norms create two separate categories under CRZ-III areas - CRZ-III A and CRZ-III B. Densely populated rural areas with a population density of 2,161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census will come under CRZ-III A. Such areas will have an NDZ of 50 meters from the HTL as against 200 meters from the HTL stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011.

On the other hand, rural areas with a population density of below 2,161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census will come under the CRZ-III B. Such areas will continue to have an NDZ of 200 meters from the HTL.

The procedure for CRZ clearances has been simplified. Only such projects/activities, which are located in the CRZ-I (ecologically sensitive areas) & CRZ-IV (areas covered between Low Tide Line and 12 nautical miles seaward), will be dealt with for CRZ clearance by the Union environment ministry. In order to address pollution in the coastal area, treatment facilities have been made permissible activities in CRZ-I areas, subject to necessary safeguards.

Kohli, however, said, "The treatment facilities, allowed in CRZ-I to reduce coastal pollution, means several ecologically fragile areas will have sewage treatment plants transferring pollution from land to sea."

For all other project activities located in CRZ-II (urban) or CRZ III (rural) areas, the CRZ clearance will be considered at the level of the Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA).

Temporary tourism facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities can be set up in beaches under new norms. Such temporary tourism facilities can also be permissible in the No Development Zone (NDZ) of the CRZ-III areas. However, a minimum distance of HTL should be maintained for setting up such facilities.

"Wherever there is a National or State Level Highway passing through the NDZ in CRZ-III areas, temporary tourism facilities have been proposed to be taken up on the seaward side of the roads. On the landward side of such roads in the NDZ, resorts/hotels and other tourism facilities can be permitted, subject to the extant regulations of the concerned state," said an official, referring to the new norms.

Regulated limestone mining can also be permitted, subject to strict environmental safeguards, in areas adequately above the height of HTL, based on recommendations of reputed National Institutes in the mining field