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CRZ Rules Eased for 'Blue Flag' Beaches

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Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Environment and Forest** has **relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules**.

CRZ rules restrict construction near beaches. Relaxation in the rules will allow States to construct infrastructure and enable the beaches to receive **'Blue Flag' certification**.

Key Points

- The Ministry selected **13 beaches** in India for the Blue Flag certificate in 2019.
- India's **CRZ laws do not allow the construction of infrastructure on beaches and islands**.
However, the Blue Flag certification requires beaches to create infrastructures like portable toilet blocks, greywater treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance, etc.
- The government notified that construction activities and facilities shall be permitted in the CRZs, including Islands, for the purpose of Blue Flag Certification in beaches.
However, these activities are **subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL)**.

High Tide Line: HTL means the line on the land up to which the highest water line reaches during the **spring tide**.

Low Tide Line: Similarly, it means the line on the land up to which the lowest water line reaches during the **spring tide**.

Spring tides: The position of both the sun and the moon in relation to the earth has direct bearing on tide height. When the **sun, the moon and the earth are in a straight line**, the **height of the tide will be higher**. These are called spring tides and they occur twice a

month, one on full moon period and another during new moon period.

Blue Flag Certification

- It is an **international recognition** conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety.
- The **'Blue Flag' beach** is an **'eco-tourism model'** and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
- The **Blue Flag Programme** was started in **France** in **1985** and has been implemented in **Europe since 1987** and in areas **outside Europe since 2001** when South Africa joined.

The Blue Flag Programme is run by the **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)** which is an international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation.

- The certification is accorded by the **Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches,** that are-
 - Environmental Education and Information
 - Bathing Water Quality
 - Environment Management and Conservation
 - Safety and Services
- **Spain** tops the list with **566 such beaches; Greece and France** follow with **515 and 395** Blue Flag beaches, respectively.
- **Japan and South Korea** are the only countries in the **south and southeastern Asia** to have Blue Flag beaches.

Source: TH