



Mains Practice Question

Q. The government has relaxed the development controls along the coastline through CRZ Notification, 2018 recently. Examine the probable impacts of notification on the coastal economy and ecosystem. (250 words)

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Approach:

- Briefly mention the key points of the notification.
- Explain the significance of the notification.
- Explain the economic and environmental impact of the notification.
- Conclude by stating the need for relaxing the development controls while taking into account the various economic and developmental concerns.

Introduction

- Nine states and four union territories in India have a sea-line border. A large population from these states depend on the sea for their livelihood.
- From mineral mining, defense activities, space centers to fishing and tourism, a wide range of economic activities are centered around the sea. Increasing infrastructure development, urbanization, and industrialization has led to unregulated waste generation and has disturbed the ecological balance of the region. The notifications to regulate the coastal ecosystem were first introduced in 1991 to address these emerging concerns.

Body

Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ)

- The distance up to which development along rivers, creeks, and backwaters is to be regulated is governed by the distance up to which the tidal effect of the sea is experienced in rivers, creeks or back-waters.
- Coastal Regulation Zones are the coastal stretches within 500 meters of High Tide Line on the landward side. The various Coastal Regulation Zone grades represent the ecological sensitivity of a region in decreasing order with I being the most sensitive.
- These are classified into four categories include ecologically sensitive areas, substantially built-up urban areas, relatively undisturbed rural areas and the water area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 nautical miles seaward.
- Setting up of new industries and expansion of existing industries, manufacture or handling or storage or disposal of hazardous substances, mining, waste disposal are not allowed in these areas.

CRZ Notification, 2018

- The government has recently approved the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018 based on the recommendations of Shailesh Nayak committee to encourage construction of buildings and launch tourism activities in areas that are closer to the high tide line.

- The notification recommends that buildings can be constructed behind existing structures and roads, promotes housing infrastructure and slum redevelopment activities and tourism. It also recommends the reclamation of the seabed in the larger public interest such as bridges, sea-links on stilts, roads, important national installations related to coastal security, tourism.

Impact of notification

- **Marine biodiversity:** Port construction and real estate development along with the weak environmental safeguards could damage fragile marine ecosystems of the inter-tidal areas. For example, excessive beach lighting is confusing and harmful to some marine species, including migrating turtles. Allowing reclamation of lands for specific infrastructure such as ports, bridges and fisheries-related structures can affect mangrove in the coastal areas.
- **The livelihood of small and traditional fishermen:** Fishermen along the coastline are not protected under the notification. The relaxation of development controls could subject them to severe commercial pressures. There was no consultation with coastal communities which can have serious impacts on livelihoods and ecology.
- **Employment generation:** The decision to allow construction and tourist facilities closer to the coast may boost employment and grow local business. It is in line with the Start-Up India initiative.
- **Temporary tourism** facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities can increase the stress of tourism in the environmentally fragile area and can lead to further deterioration. The **encroachment and pollution** due to the increasing commercial activity can destroy the fishing grounds.
- **State-specific growth:** All activities except those requiring environmental clearances should fall under the ambit of the state and local planning bodies instead of being regulated by central policy. A delegation of the regulatory powers to the State can boost the cooperative federalism and can promote state-specific coastal area development and environmental protection.
- **Reduced time for disaster preparation:** Reduction in the No Development Zone to 20 meters can promote construction activities which can add to the vulnerability of these areas which are prone to environmental disasters like cyclones and Tsunami.

Conclusion

- As per the M.S. Swaminathan expert committee recommendation, Government should enact a law on the lines of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 to protect the traditional rights and interests of fishermen and coastal communities. The government should hold a wide range of consultation with local folks as they are better equipped for effective implementation of a policy.
- Any set of rules regulating human activity along India's 7,500 km coastline should ensure the long-term welfare of the millions of people who live in harmony with a fragile ecosystem.
- With a focus on sustainable development, Government should identify specific areas for such activity, assess its environmental impact, demarcate the area under the State's management plans, and fix responsibility for enforcement, particularly for pollution control.
- Balance must be maintained to promote the development and the sanctity of our coastal zones.