



Salt Pans Land

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Why in News?

Recently, the Centre approved the transfer of **256 acres of salt pan land** in Mumbai to the **Dharavi Redevelopment Project Pvt Ltd (DRPPL)** for building rental housing for **slum dwellers**.

- Environmentalists raised ecological concerns about construction on **salt pan lands**.

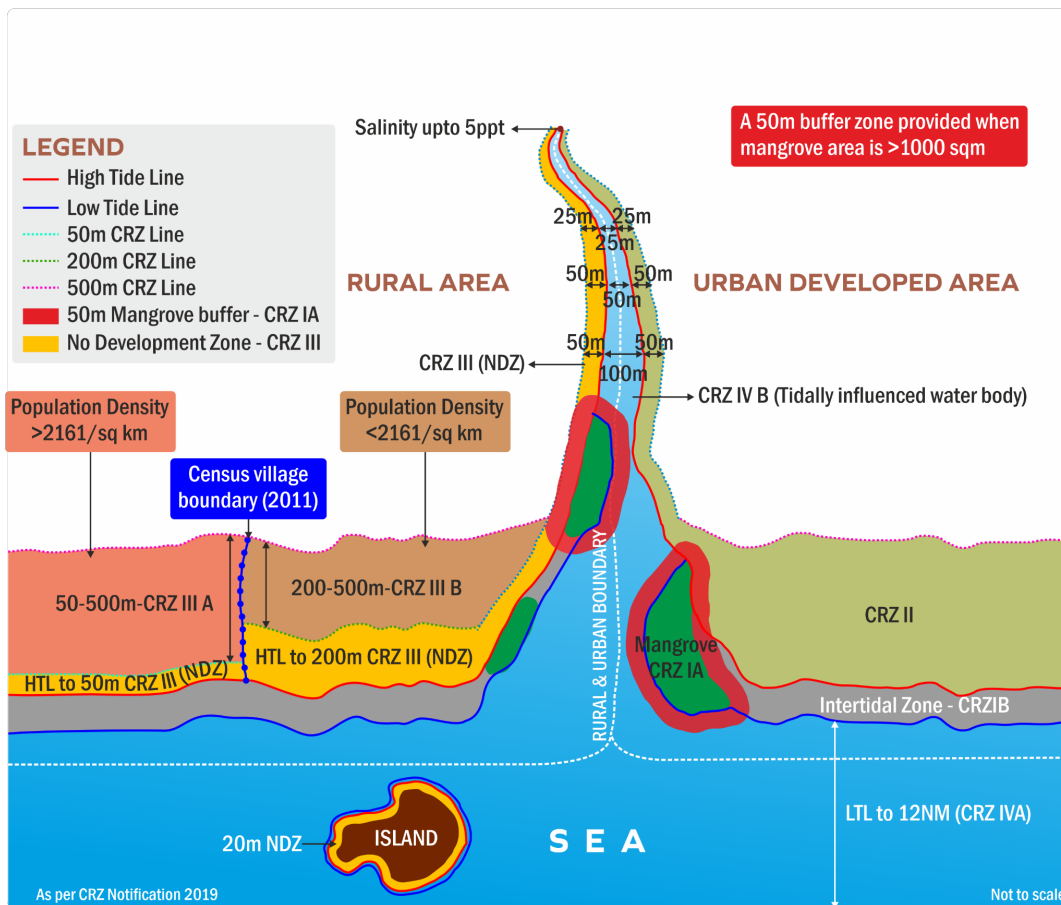
What are Salt Pan Lands?

- **About:**
 - Salt pans are **low-lying tracts of land where seawater periodically flows in**, leaving behind deposits of salt and minerals.
 - This **natural process** plays a critical role in maintaining the **balance of coastal ecosystems**.
- **Protection Status:**
 - Under **the CRZ Notification of 2011**, these ecologically sensitive areas are **classified under CRZ-1B** and **restrict economic activities except salt extraction and natural gas exploration**.
- **Salt Pans in India:**
 - In Mumbai, a total of **5,378 acres** have been **designated as salt pan lands**.
 - On a national scale, **around 60,000 acres of salt pan lands** are identified, distributed across states like **Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Gujarat, and Karnataka**.
 - **Andhra Pradesh has the largest expanse** (20,716 acres), followed by Tamil Nadu (17,095 acres) and Maharashtra (12,662 acres).

Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)

- The **CRZ was first notified in 1991** by **the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)** under **the Environment Protection Act of 1986**. The CRZ is categorized into five zones: **CRZ-I, CRZ-II, CRZ-III, CRZ-IV, and CRZ-V**.
 - **CRZ-I** are **ecologically sensitive** areas like mangroves, coral reefs, biosphere reserves etc.
 - **CRZ-II** includes built-up areas - **villages and towns** that are already well established.
 - **CRZ-III** are **areas that are undisturbed** and do not fall under either in Category I or II.
 - **CRZ-IV** is the **aquatic area** from low tide line up to territorial limits.

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- CRZ is an **area near the coastline** that's governed by rules to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. The CRZ includes:
 - It is the land between **the high tide line (HTL)** and the **low tide line (LTL)**.
 - A 100-metre stretch along the banks of **rivers, estuaries, backwaters, and creeks** that are affected by tides.
 - The river banks on either side of estuaries.

What is the Significance of Salt Pans?

- **Environmental:** Alongside **the coastal mangroves**, **salt pans** form a vital **ecological barrier** that **mitigates flooding risks**.
- **Economic:** Salt pans provide **employment for a large number of workers**, especially in rural and coastal areas. Labourers engage in activities like harvesting, processing, and transporting salt.
- **Raw Material:** Salt produced in salt pans is essential for various industries, including **chemical production (e.g., chlorine, caustic soda)**, **agriculture (as animal feed)**, and water treatment.
- **Tourism Attraction:** Some salt pans, especially those with scenic landscapes, have become tourist destinations, adding economic value through **ecotourism and cultural tourism**.

What are Welfare Schemes the Government Initiated for Salt Workers?

- **Scheme for Grant of Rewards to the Children of Salt Labourers:** It provides financial rewards to students for their educational development.
- **Namak Mazdoor Awas Yojana (NMAY):** It provides for the construction of houses for salt workers. It promotes **cooperative societies** in the salt industry.
- **Salt Commissioner's Organization (SCO):** It **monitors the development of the salt**

industry, including planning, facilitating technology upgradation, and conducting training programs for salt workers.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Among the following, who are the Agaria Community?(2009)

- (a) A traditional toddy tappers community of Andhra Pradesh
- (b) A traditional fishing community of Maharashtra
- (c) A traditional silk-weaving community of Karnataka
- (d) A traditional salt pan workers community of Gujarat

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. The effective management of land and water resources will drastically reduce the human miseries. Explain. (2016)

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