



# Buried in the sands

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## **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 (MoEFCC).
- 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.
- 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.

### **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.
- 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'.

### **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.
- 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.

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