

CRZ RULES EASED FOR 'BLUE FLAG' BEACHES

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Sea view: Tourists at Eden beach in Chinna Veerampattinam near Puducherry. The Ministry has selected 13 beaches in India to vie for the certificate. S.S. KUMARS.S. KUMAR

The Environment Ministry has relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules that restrict construction near beaches to help States construct infrastructure and enable them to receive 'Blue Flag' certification.

Last year, the Ministry selected 13 beaches in India to vie for the certificate. This is an international recognition conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety.

The earmarked beaches are — Ghoghala beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave beach (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod beaches (Karnataka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa), Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).

Gazette notification

The Blue Flag certification, however, requires beaches to create certain infrastructure — portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance and the like. However, India's CRZ laws don't allow the construction of such infrastructure on beaches and islands. Via an order on January 9, the Environment Ministry eased these restrictions for the "purposes of Blue Flag certification".

"...Central Government hereby declares that for the purpose of Blue Flag Certification in such identified beaches, the following activities and facilities shall be permitted in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), including Islands, subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from HTL (High Tide Line)," the gazette notification notes.

The certification is accorded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches, that is, (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services.

'Eco-tourism'

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 started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.

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