

Draft coastal management notification faces protests

NIDHI JAMWAL



RANJAN PARIKAR

New coastal management notification may adversely affect coasts, communities

Fisherfolks across India's 7,500 km long coastline are up in arms against the draft Coastal Zone Management Notification. The coastal communities say the notification does not acknowledge their traditional rights and can damage the coasts and the people. The draft, prepared by the Union ministry of environment and forests (MOEF), will soon be forwarded to the prime minister for his approval.

Problem daft

The 2007 draft will replace the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 1991. On July 19, 2004, MOEF had constituted a 13-member panel under agriculture scientist M S Swaminathan to review the 1991 notification.

The committee submitted its report in February 2005, paving the way for the new draft.

The draft categorises coastal areas into four management zones—CMZ-I, CMZ-II, CMZ-III and CMZ-IV.

- CMZ-I includes ecologically sensitive areas like coral reefs and mangroves

- CMZ-II consists of areas of particular concern—coastal municipalities, *panchayats* with more than 400 persons per sq km, ports, tourist areas and special economic zones

- CMZ-III includes open areas including coastal waters—excluding those classified as CMZ- I, II and IV

- CMZ-IV includes the inland territories of Andaman and Nicobar (A&N), Lakshadweep, and other offshore islands

The draft has given a new definition to 'coastal zone', which, it says, includes "the area from the territorial waters limit—12 nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline—including its sea bed, the adjacent land area along the coast and inland water bodies influenced by tidal action".

The draft envisages creating what it calls setback lines along the coast.

This is a line that will be scientifically calculated based on the vulnerability of the coast to various hazards.

MOEF says many industrialised countries follow the practice. Though the draft is

silent on the technical guidelines for measuring the line, the ministry says they "may be provided" later.

The draft has also recommended constructing a seawall for setback line in CRZ-II areas. It also has a provision for creating a 31-member National Board for Sustainable Coastal Zone Management chaired by the Union minister for environment and forests.

Business as usual

"The government is facilitating setting up of industry in the sea. The new definition of coastal zones will only benefit industry which will pollute the coasts, threatening livelihoods of the fisherfolks," says Ossie Fernandes of the Coastal Action Network in Chennai.