

11. Blue Flag Certification

Prelims Level: Environment

Mains Level: GS-III Conservation of Environment

Why in News?

- The Centre issued an Extraordinary Gazette Notification declaring a list of activities and facilities that would be permissible in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas of certain beaches, which have been identified for obtaining the 'Blue Flag' certification.

Highlights:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had identified 13 beaches across the country for the Blue Flag certification, and announced a list of activities that would be permissible in their respective CRZ zones for that purpose.

Blue Flag certification:

- The 'Blue Flag' is a certification that can be obtained by a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator, and serves as an eco-label.
- The certification is awarded by the Denmark-based non-profit Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), which sets stringent environmental, educational, safety-related and access-related criteria that applicants must meet and maintain. It is awarded annually to beaches and marinas in FEE member countries.
- The certification is known as an indication of high environmental and quality standards. Forty-seven countries currently participate in the program, and 4,573 beaches, marinas, and boats have this certification.
- The Environment Ministry identified the following beaches in India for Blue Flag certification: Shivrajpur (Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat), Bhogave (Sindhudurg, Maharashtra), Ghoghla (Diu, Daman and Diu), Miramar (Panjim, Goa), Kasarkod (Karwar, Karnataka), Padubidri (Udupi, Karnataka), Kappad (Kozhikode, Kerala), Eden (Puducherry), Mahabalipuram (Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu), Rushikonda (Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh), Golden (Puri, Odisha), and Radhanagar (Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar).

New exemptions:

- The following activities and facilities would be permitted in the CRZ of the beaches, including Islands, subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL):

- Portable toilet blocks, change rooms and shower panels; Grey water treatment plant;
- Solid waste management plant; Solar power plant; Purified drinking water facility; Beach access pathways;
- Landscaping lighting; Seating benches and sit-out umbrellas; Outdoor play / fitness equipment;
- CCTV surveillance and control room; First aid station; Cloak room facility;
- Safety Watch Towers and Beach Safety Equipment;
- Beach layout, environment information boards and other signages; Fencing, preferably vegetative; Parking facilities; Entry gate, tourist facilitation centre; and
- Other associated facilities or infrastructure, as per requirements of Blue Flag Certification.
- The notification also said that these activities and facilities would be exempt from prior clearance under the provisions of CRZ Notification, Island Protection Zone Notification and Island Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications respectively.

