

India divides coast into zones to conserve biodiversity

India Wednesday finalised a draft to divide its over 7,000-km long coastal belt into four zones to conserve the biodiversity and manage disasters better.

The ministry of environment and forests has issued a circular for the protection and sustainable development of the country's coastal stretches and marine environment.

The ministry said it would be achieved through 'sustainable coastal zone management practices based on sound scientific principles taking into account the vulnerabilities of the coast to natural hazards, sustainable livelihood security for local communities, and conservation of ecologically and culturally significant coastal resources'.

It would set up a National Board for Sustainable Coastal Zone Management to provide policy advice to the central government on matters related to these issues.

'A National Institute for Sustainable Coastal Zone Management (NISCZM) shall be set up for assisting the central government and the state governments to prepare the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans,' the ministry said.

The Coastal Zone Management (CMZ) area is classified as CMZ-I (ecologically sensitive), CMZ-II areas like coastal municipalities, CMZ-III open areas that include coastal waters up to territorial limits and CMZ-IV comprising Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, offshore islands and islands in coastal backwaters.

'For the purpose of management, the CMZ-I areas would be mapped, notified by the central government and managed through integrated coastal zone management plans.

'The CMZ-II area, which includes coastal municipalities, panchayats with population density more than 400 persons per sq km, ports and harbours, tourism areas and airports, will be managed through Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans,' the ministry circular said.

In the CMZ-III and IV, developmental works would be undertaken without disturbing the existing dwellings and restricting local people from fishing.

'For the purpose of regulating the activities in the CMZ areas, a setback line on the landward side would be demarcated based on vulnerability of the coast to natural and manmade hazards.

'The mapping of the setback line in the CMZ-I, II and III will be done taking into account parameters such as elevation, geomorphology, sea level trends and horizontal shoreline displacement.'

The ministry has also invited suggestions from various stake holders and the public to send their suggestions within two months.

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