

# Coastal voices in growth plan

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**New Delhi, Jan. 8:** Communities living along India's 7,500km coastline will for the first time be able to shape development plans in their own regions under rules notified this week.

The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification, 2011, from the Union environment ministry seeks to introduce the participation of local communities in coastal management plans, a feature absent in the notification of 1991.

A senior environment ministry official said that in the absence of local participation, the aspirations of coastal communities have often been ignored during various development projects — from hotels to apartment blocks to ports — over the past two decades.

“This has been a source of continuous conflict at several coastal sites,” said Arumugham Senthil Vel, the additional director in the coastal zone management division of the ministry.

“Now, all management plans will be put (before) local people.”

The CRZ 2011 has also reduced the “no-development zone” from 200m from the high-tide line to 100m, but exclusively to meet increased demands of housing for the fishing and coastal communities.

About 250 million people live in India's coastal areas, and coastal waters are a source of primary livelihood for about 7 million homes.

The CRZ 2011 has introduced special provisions with conditions for Mumbai, the Kerala backwaters, Goa and several critically vulnerable coastal areas, including the Sunderbans of Bengal, and selected coastal sites in all coastal states.

Environment minister Jairam Ramesh said the new rules would not condone violations of the CRZ 1991. His ministry would tell states to identify all such infringements within the next four months.