# Blue Flag Certification

## Why in news?

Eight beaches in India have been awarded the 'Blue Flag' certification by an eminent international jury.

## Who are the jury members?

- It comprises members of the
    1. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),
    2. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO),
    3. Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and
    4. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

## What are the beaches selected?

- The beaches selected for the certification are: Kappad, Shivrajpur, Ghoghla, Kasarkod, Padubidri, Rushikonda, Golden and Radhanagar.
- It is an outstanding feat considering that no 'Blue Flag' nation has ever been awarded for 8 beaches in a single attempt.
- This is also a global recognition of India's conservation and sustainable development efforts.
- In January 2020, the Centre issued a Gazette Notification declaring a list of activities and facilities that would be permissible in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas of certain beaches.
- These beaches are those that are identified for obtaining the 'Blue Flag' certification.

## What is the 'Blue Flag' certification?

- The 'Blue Flag' certification can be obtained by a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator, and serves as an eco-label.
- It is awarded by the Denmark-based non-profit Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).
- It 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.

## What is the Blue Flag programme?

- The Blue Flag programme was started in France in 1985 and in areas out of Europe in 2001.
- The programme promotes **sustainable development** in freshwater and marine areas through four main criteria.
- The **four criteria** include water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety.
- Forty-seven countries currently participate in the program.
- 4,573 beaches, marinas, and boats have this certification.
- In its July 2019 notification, the Environment Ministry identified the 12 beaches in India for Blue Flag certification.

## What activities are permitted in the CRZ?

- The activities and facilities like portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plant, solar power plant, etc., would be permitted in the CRZ of the beaches, including islands.
- This would be subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL).
- 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.

**Source: The Indian Express**

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