Concerns with Coastal Conservation Measures

Why in news?

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National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) has found that nearly one-third of the country’s coastline is severely eroded.

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What are findings of NCCR?

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- Over 234 square kilometres of Indian land has already been lost and more would vanish if erosion continues unrestrained.
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- The problem is more formidable on the eastern coast because of frequent and relatively stronger cyclonic activity in the Bay of Bengal than on the western coast though the latter is also not fully immune to it.
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- West Bengal is the most vulnerable state, with 63 per cent of its shoreline affected by erosion, followed by Puducherry (57 per cent), Kerala (45 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (41 per cent).
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What are the reasons behind the erosion?

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- Climate change-driven rise in sea level and increased intensity of ocean storms are among the most significant reasons for coastal erosion.
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- Human activity closer to the shoreline, such as construction, dredging, quarrying and sand mining, is exacerbating the menace.
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- In its natural state, this eco-system has a sobering influence on saline winds, cyclones, sea waves and incursion of seawater into underground

aquifers.
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- Though the coastal zone regulations, amended from time to time, are meant to preserve the seashore yet their implementation has been below par.
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What are the concerns with government measures?

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- Union government intends to dilute these norms by bringing a new Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2018.
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- Under this notification, even some of the fragile coastal areas are mooted to be opened up for tourism and other purposes by simplifying the project clearance procedures and giving greater say to states to manage the seaside tracts.
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- Environmentalists feel that this would impair the ecology of the coastal belts and might aggravate sea erosion.
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- The changes mooted in the land use of the coastal regulation zone-I and zone-II, for instance, can be a case in point.
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- The zone-I comprises ecologically the most sensitive areas, which are currently marked “off-limit” for tourism and infrastructure.
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- But the draft notification allows this zone to be used for nature trails and eco-tourism, though with the state government’s consent.
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- Similarly, coastal zone-II, comprising relatively undisturbed areas close to the shoreline, which has a “no development” belt of 200 metres, is proposed to be redrawn to restrict the no-development strip to merely 50 metres.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- Instead of relaxations government should concentrate on taking anti-erosion measures such as creating wave-breakers and raising vegetative protection belts of the kind successfully tried out in the tsunami-hit areas.
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- The most endangered regions should, at least, be effectively shielded against any kind of potentially erosive activity.
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- The seashore needs special care because it harbours valuable mangroves, seaweeds, coral reefs, and other kinds of marine biodiversity, which serve as a source of raw material for several industries, notably pharmaceutical and cosmetic units.
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- This belt, moreover, is ecologically highly sensitive because of the constant interaction of marine and territorial ecosystems and, therefore, needs cautious handling.
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Source: Business Standard

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