

Blue flag certification

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Source: *The Hindu*

Manifest pedagogy

Environmental degradation issues are part of mains syllabus. Blue flag certification issue being in the news, could be a probable area of preparation. Marine pollution would be an important dimension of the topic to prepare

In news

- 12 Indian beaches are in the race to crest the Blue flag certification

Placing it in syllabus

- Conservation, environment pollution and degradation

Static dimensions

- Pollution of beaches
- What is blue flag certification
- Criteria for qualifications

Current dimensions

- 12 Indian beaches approved for blue flag certification
- SCION project

Content

The Union Environment Ministry has selected 12 beaches in India to vie for a 'Blue Flag' certification, an international recognition conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety

These beaches are at Shivrajpur (Gujarat), Bhogave

(Maharashtra), Ghoghla (Diu), Miramar (Goa), Kasarkod and Padubidri (Karnataka), Kappad (Kerala), Eden (Puducherry), Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu), Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh), Golden (Odisha), and Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

Pollution of beaches

Beach pollution is a persistent problem all around the world. Studies have shown that beach pollution is usually infrequent and confined to local areas

Sources of beach pollution include

SOLID WASTES Plastic, rubber, foam materials and metals which take hundreds of years to break down

SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS A mixture of human generated waste is dumped into the oceans from sewage treatment plants. Sewage sludge is made up of organic waste containing bacteria, viruses, poisonous compounds, synthetic and organic chemicals and an overabundance of nutrients

STORMWATER RUNOFF Combined sewer systems are designed to carry both raw sewage and storm water runoff to sewage treatment plants. During heavy rainstorms, these systems can become hydraulically overloaded and discharge a mixture of raw sewage and polluted runoff into local waterways and downstream beaches

POLLUTED RUNOFF FROM FARMS, ROADS and CITIES Much of the pollution comes from illegal dumping of household and industrial chemicals, automobile waste, and agricultural chemical and fertilizer usage

ACCIDENTAL OIL SPILLS This encompasses oil spills from ocean going tankers, offshore drilling, and illegal dumping

Problems caused due to beachfront pollution are

- The presence of debris not only affects the aesthetic

appeal of beaches negatively but also reduces their recreational (tourism) value drastically.

- The destruction of the habitats of the organisms that call the beachfront home as well as the actual killing off of the organisms with oil spills, solid waste trash (plastics, metals), chemicals etc...
- Many harmful microorganisms (viruses, bacteria, protozoans) are released into the ocean through untreated or partially treated sewage

The National Centre of Coastal Research (NCCR) released a report on beach pollution in India in 2018 which highlighted that *tourism and fishing are the biggest culprits*, contributing most of the plastic litter on beaches

Blue flag certification

- The Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas is run by the international, **non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education)**.
- It started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987 and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.
- **At present Japan and South Korea are the only countries in South and southeastern Asia to have Blue Flag beaches.**
- Spain tops the list followed by Greece and France.
- The Blue Flag is sought for beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators as an indication of their high environmental and quality standards.
- The certification include standards for quality, safety, environmental education and information, the provision of services and general environmental management criteria.
- Certificates, which FEE refers to as awards, are issued on an annual basis to beaches and marinas of FEE member countries

Criteria for Blue Flag certification of beaches

There are nearly 33 criteria that has to be met to qualify for a Blue Flag certification. Some criteria are voluntary and some compulsory. Some of them are

- Information relating to coastal zone ecosystems and natural, sensitive areas in the coastal zone must be displayed.
- Information about bathing water quality must be displayed.
- Information about the Blue Flag Programme must be displayed.
- Compliance with the requirements and standards for excellent bathing water quality.
- No industrial or sewage related discharges may affect the beach area.
- Compliance of the community with requirements for sewage treatment and effluent quality.
- The beach must comply with all regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach (coastal zone planning and environmental legislation).
- Waste disposal bins/receptacles must be available on/by the beach in adequate numbers, regularly maintained and emptied.
- Adequate and clean sanitary facilities with controlled sewage disposal.
- Regulation concerning dogs and other domestic animals on the beach must be strictly enforced.
- An adequate number of lifeguards and/or lifesaving equipment must be available at the beach.
- A minimum of one Blue Flag beach in each municipality must have access and toilet facilities provided for disabled persons

Indian beaches and Blue flag certification

About ₹20 crore have been spent on each of the beaches which

are in the race to bag Blue flag certification. It will be decided by FEE jury by October, 2019 if these beaches meet the standards. If approved, beaches will be given the qualification for a year and must apply annually to continue meriting the right to fly the flag at their locations.

The Indian beaches are being developed by the **Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM)**, an environment ministry's body working for the management of coastal areas, according to the Blue Flag certification standards.

In December 2017 a pilot blue flag project was launched to develop Indian beaches. The prime objective of the project is to enhance standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches. Under the project, each state or union territory has been asked to nominate a beach which will be funded through the ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme

Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha became the first in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification in 2018

Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM)

SICOM has been established under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change, Government of India with a vision for vibrant, healthy and resilient Coastal and Marine Environment

Objective and Functions of SICOM

- To Support implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) activities in India.
- To promote Research & Development (R&D) and stakeholder participation in management of the Coastal areas.
- To support to check violations to Coastal Regulatory Zones (CRZ) through improved technology-enabled enforcement, strengthened institutions, and regulatory and legal reform

Beach Environment & Aesthetic Management System (BEAMS)

MoEF&CC has conceived an integrated coastal management scheme called **BEAMS** *to reduce existing pollutants on beaches and to aspire & achieve such high International Standards in India*

The main objective of setting up of BEAMS programme is to promote sustainable development in coastal regions of India and for the beach management authorities to strive to achieve high international standards in four categories of

- Environmental Management including cleanliness, solid waste management in beaches.
- Environment Education.
- Safety & Security of Beachgoers.
- Bathing Water Quality Standards

SICOM has initiated the process for clean beaches in 13 pilot beaches (one pilot beach in every Coastal States/UTs) under this programme and inline with Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan