

Centre defends CRZ norms relaxation

By SV Krishna Chaitanya|Express News Service| Published: 14th October 2017 03:39 AM|

Last Updated: 14th October 2017 07:58 AM| A+ A A- |



Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology, checks a stall after inaugurating the India International Science Festival 2017, at Anna University on Friday. Abdul Latif Roshan, Minister of Higher Education, Afghanistan, is also seen | Martin Louis

CHENNAI: The Centre on Friday defended its decision to relax Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011 to mine atomic minerals from “supposed to be” no development areas like intertidal and CRZ-1 areas.

YS Chowdary, Union Minister of State for Earth Sciences, told Express on the sidelines of inauguration of India International Science Festival (IISC-2017), that the amendment was brought out keeping in mind environmental safeguards.

“Mining will be allowed after conducting case by case assessment,” he said assuring that the change will not be a tool for rampant and unscientific mining. This is the first time, the Centre has reacted after October 6 impromptu amendment, which has shocked environmental activists across the country. Chowdary said the amendment was heavily guarded and was intended to tap minerals that had strategic applications, but not at the cost of environment.

When asked why the amendment was silent on key modalities like Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), the minister said the broad guidelines had been listed and the modalities will be discussed when people apply. Dismissing accusations from green activists, he said the government was very serious about environment protection.

Meanwhile, Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, refused to take direct questions on diluting CRZ Notification, but said the government had to strike a balance between environment and development.

“The issue of coastal regulations is a complex subject. We are studying this very meticulously. I have gone into the depth of everything and my ministry is studying everything in a very ambitious manner. We are looking at things with utmost objectivity. This is about what the country needs. The States will be consulted. After all, I can’t make a law in Delhi and say Tamil Nadu you follow it. We have to consult everybody. I can assure that we are getting into the nitty-gritty of the whole issue and we will bring out a thoroughly comprehensive and inclusive policy in future,” he told Express soon after attending Science and Technology Minister’s Conclave in IIT Madras.

He also said the ministry will not compromise anything that was strategic. Again, Harsh Vardhan emphasised that development concerns were also equally important. “For a particular thing, two intellectuals of the highest order will have two different views. So, you can imagine how difficult and cumbersome it is for any government to formulate a strategy like this. You have to fully apply your mind, take the help of the best possible minds inside and outside the system and go ahead. Its a long-drawn process and I can assure that we are not sleeping over anything,” he said.