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# Govt to ease rules on construction around protected monuments

No construction work or related activity is generally permitted in prohibited and regulated areas around all 3,696 protected monuments across the country, unless a specific approval is taken from the National Monuments Authority (NMA).

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Current restrictions may continue for UNESCO heritage sites like the Taj Mahal in Agra. File

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The government will soon liberalise construction activity in the vicinity of protected monuments across the country.

Currently, construction up to 100 metres around protected monuments is prohibited, while an area up to 200 metres beyond the prohibited area is regulated, under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, and has stringent rules in terms of construction-related permit.

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This system is set to change, according to a submission by Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy in Parliament. “The government has taken a decision to examine the legal issues affecting construction-related activities around centrally protected monuments and sites in order to allow for infrastructure (related work), and, at the same time, preserve the rich heritage of the country,” Reddy stated in [Rajya Sabha](#) last week.

He was responding to a question by Trinamool Congress MP Jawhar Sircar on whether the AMASR Act is likely to be amended. Sources say the new AMASR amendment Bill will be tabled during the coming Monsoon Session.

Officials say there is a feeling that the Act – in its present form – restricts a lot of areas which could be put to good use, specifically in case of developmental and infrastructure-related work. It is expected that the amendments would pertain to making some relaxation in these zones, specifically in case of smaller monuments such as statues, cemeteries and cannons, among others, which don’t need such a big area around them to be restricted for their protection.

Responding to another question by Congress MP Naranbhai J Rathwa on “the precise reasons for prohibiting residents from constructing their houses within 100 metres of small and insignificant structures, causing a lot of inconveniences and revenue (monetary) loss to them”, Reddy assured the MP that the amendment will happen soon.

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Even as the government can bring about liberalisation in case of most monuments, for UNESCO World Heritage Sites (India has 40 of them, including Taj Mahal in Agra, Dholavira in Gujarat, Ramappa Temple in Telangana and Red Fort and Qutub Minar in Delhi), these restrictions may stay, since construction in regulated and prohibited zones may impact these heritage structures. UNESCO has generally been encouraging such a concept to be complied with in the case of all world heritage sites.

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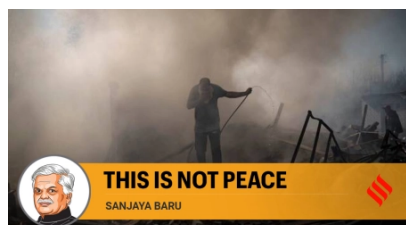
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