

Opening Roads in Military Cantonments

What is the issue?

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- Government recently ordered the opening of all roads in military cantonments.

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- Families of Army officers and retired Army personnel are increasingly opposing this move.

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What are military cantonments?

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- Cantonments are designed as places of residence of both civilians and military personnel.

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- There are nearly 60 cantonments across the country.

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- Cantonment Boards are elected bodies.

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- They run schools, hospitals, and vocational training centres.

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- They cater to a civilian population of more than 21 lakh.

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- Moreover, cantonments are notified in the gazette and governed by an Act of Parliament.

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- Any change in the governance of cantonments needs an amendment to the Act by Parliament.

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- This includes barring civilians from using the roads within them.

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What was the problem?

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- Some cantonment roads are closed for the general public.

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- There were instances in which places of worship could not be reached due to closure of these routes.

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- Other incidents highlighted the cemetery becoming inaccessible due to these restrictions.

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- Some roads were closed by the local military authorities without following the existing procedure.

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What is the government's decision?

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- A government order for opening all roads in cantonments was issued.

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- Also, a procedure for closing any road was also formally given by the Defence Ministry.

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- It will be based on intelligence inputs and for security considerations.

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- The Ministry proposes to undertake a review of the state of roads in cantonments soon.

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What are the concerns?

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- The major objection to the opening of roads is related to the security of military installations.

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- Also, the families of Army personnel staying inside the cantonments.

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- There is also a fear that the land mafia might try to encroach on defence land

in the cantonments.

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- Retired officers complain that the decision was taken without consulting the Army.

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- The issue has suggested a deterioration of civil-military relations.

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What is the government's response?

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- The order was issued only after a litany of complaints to the Ministry.

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- The government argues that its orders do not affect the security posture.

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- This is because they do not deal with military stations but only with cantonments.

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Source: Indian Express

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