



## Opening Roads in Military Cantonments

### What is the issue?

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- \n• Government recently ordered the opening of all roads in military cantonments.
- \n• 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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- \n• Cantonments are designed as places of residence of both civilians and military personnel.
- \n• There are nearly 60 cantonments across the country.
- \n• Cantonment Boards are elected bodies.
- \n• They run schools, hospitals, and vocational training centres.
- \n• They cater to a civilian population of more than 21 lakh.
- \n• Moreover, cantonments are notified in the gazette and governed by an Act of Parliament.
- \n• Any change in the governance of cantonments needs an amendment to the Act by Parliament.
- \n• 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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