

Puri Heritage Corridor Case



Residents of Puri had moved the High Court alleging that, structural safety of 800-year-old Jagannath Temple could be in danger, if land surrounding the temple were dug up.

Highlights

- They also allege that; state government has insulted the devotees by demolishing mutts in order to clear roads to Shri Jagannath temple. These roads were closely linked with different rituals of 12th century shrine because of ongoing Srimandir Parikrama Project.
- Case has also been taken up in the Apex court at times, when Orissa High Court is hearing a plea against construction.

About Srimandir Parikrama Project

The foundation stone for the Rs 800 crore Srimandir Parikrama Plan (also called Jagannath Temple corridor project) was laid by CM of Odisha in November 2021. Under this project, area within 75-metre perimeter of Jagannath Temple was to be transformed into a heritage corridor, in order to attract devotees from world. It has been modelled on the line of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project of Varanasi. It will have amenities for pilgrims like cloak rooms, reception centre, restrooms, etc. Project was scheduled to be completed by May 2023. Its construction has been taken up by Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation (OBCC) of state government, while Tata Projects is running it on ground. Its construction also took into consideration a Supreme Court judgement in 2019, that suggested to clear all structure around 75-metre radius for the safety, scrutiny and improvement of the temple.

Temple governance

The Jagannath Temple is a centrally protected monument and ASI is its custodian. Thus, 100 metre around the perimeter of temple is considered as inviolate, where no construction can be taken in accordance with the Ancient Monuments and

Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and validation) Act (AMASR Act), unless National Monuments Authority (NMA) gives nod to it. NMA had issued a no objection certificate (NOC) in 2021 for the construction of a shelter pavilion, cloakroom, toilets etc. within the prohibited 75-metre zone, based on the fact that public amenities do not come under definition of construction.

What is the controversy?

The Puri Corridor Project came into controversy when government agencies dug huge pits within 100 m from the boundary of temple, which is categorised as protected zone, without getting permission from Archeological Survey of India (ASI).

About National Monuments Authority (NMA)

NMA functions under the Union Ministry of Culture. It was set up in 2011 to protect and preserve monuments and sites through management of prohibited and regulated area across centrally protected monuments.