



Places of Worship Act, 1991

Why in News?

Recently, Member of Parliament Iqra Chaudhary has approached the [Supreme Court](#) for effective implementation of the [Places of Worship \(Special Provisions\) Act, 1991](#).

Key Points

- This Act freezes/maintains the status of any place of worship in the same condition as it was on **August 15, 1947**.
- **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991:**
 - It seeks to maintain the "**religious nature**" of places of worship as it was in **1947**.
- **Objective :**
 - The purpose of this Act is to protect the religious status of places of worship and to prevent conversion between different **religious denominations** or within the same denomination.
 - **Section 3** of the Act prohibits conversion of a place of worship or even a portion thereof into a place of worship of a different religious denomination or a different class of people within the same religious denomination.
 - **Section 4(2)** of the Act states that all suits, appeals or other proceedings relating to the change of nature of a place of worship (which were pending on August 15, 1947) shall abate after the commencement of this Act and no fresh action can be taken in such cases.
 - The Act also imposes a positive obligation on the Government to maintain the religious character/nature of every place of worship as it was at the time of independence.
- **Exception:**
 - The disputed site of Ayodhya (Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid) was exempted from this Act.
 - Apart from this, some other cases were also exempted in this Act such as:
 - Any place of worship which is an ancient and historical monument or an archaeological site covered under the '[Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958](#)'.
 - Cases which have been settled or on which a final verdict has been given.

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▪ **Penalty:**

- Under **Section 6 of the Act**, any person contravening the provisions of the Act is liable to imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and also to fine.

▪ **Opinion of the Supreme Court :**

- In its 2019 Ayodhya case verdict, the Constitutional Bench of [the Supreme Court](#) referred to this law, saying that it manifests the secular values of the Constitution and strictly prohibits its retrogression

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