

Aliens can't enter restricted areas

By Kuldip Nayar

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The Central Government has refused to "make any exception" in case of foreigners wanting to enter protected or restricted areas.

Some time back Kohima wanted New Delhi to relax restrictions on foreigners visiting Nagaland for religious functions or educational seminars.

The Central Government has said it will not be possible to depart from the standing rules because "this could impinge on the security interests of the State."

According to official sources, foreigners residing in India are allowed to visit Nagaland provided such a visit is sponsored by "a reputable organisation" in Nagaland and it is "for a public purpose". The Central Government has to be satisfied about the bona fides of the foreigner.

Other foreigners, official sources say, are also granted permits to visit close relations for short durations provided "the relationship is genuine" and "there is no specific political reason for withholding

permission."

For many years, certain areas in the north and north-eastern India have been declared as restricted or protected areas for reasons of security. Foreigners have to obtain special permits to travel to these parts.

Restricted areas include Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and the five northern districts of West Bengal. Permits for travel to these places are granted both by the Central Government and the State Government.

However, in the case of protected areas, only the Central Government gives permits because they are considered "extremely sensitive". These areas include Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim.

Foreigners are not allowed to visit these areas except on special grounds. For example, foreign technicians engaged in oil exploration work or work connected with hydro-electric projects. Even in such cases the visit is limited to the minimum period and to the project site concerned.

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