

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS

PROTECTION FROM MISUSE

NEW LAW COMES INTO FORCE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 15.

Offences against protected monuments by way of destruction, removal, defacement or misuse will hereafter be a cognisable offence under the law. This provision for the protection and preservation of archaeological wealth of the country has been incorporated in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958 which came into force to-day.

Rules for the enforcement of the new Act have also been published in a Gazette notification issued to-day.

The essential safeguards provided by the Act afford a greater measure of protection to cultural relics than was possible hitherto under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904.

To ensure proper preservation of ancient sites for posterity or for their scientific excavation by Archaeologists, the new act provides that no person, including the owner or occupier of such sites, shall encumber the site with modern construction or undertake mining, quarrying, excavating and blasting operation without the permission of the Central Government.

The new legislation provides for compulsory acquisition of antiquities of historical or archaeological importance which are in private possession and in danger of being destroyed or misused. The Central Government also reserves to itself the right to prohibit the movement of such antiquities except with the permission of the Director-General.

Entry into important monuments in the country will be regulated by a small uniform fee of 20 Naye Paise per person except in the case of children below the age of 15 who will be admitted free of charge.

The monuments are: Charminar at Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh; site of the Mauryan Palace at Kumrahar and the Buddhist monuments at Nalanda in Bihar; Ajanta caves, Elephanta and Karla caves in Bombay State; the Delhi Fort and Qutab archaeological area in Delhi; group of temples at Khajuraho; Buddhist caves at Bagh and the Buddhist monuments at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh; Gingee fortress including monuments on Krishnagiri and Rajgiri hills in Madras State; Col. Gumbad at Bijapur; Daria Daulat Bagh at Seringapatam; Agra fort at Agra; Akbar's tomb at Sikandara and Residency building at Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.