

Green nod for Okhla sanctuary ecosensitive zone, decks cleared for Noida construction

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By: [Express News Service](#)

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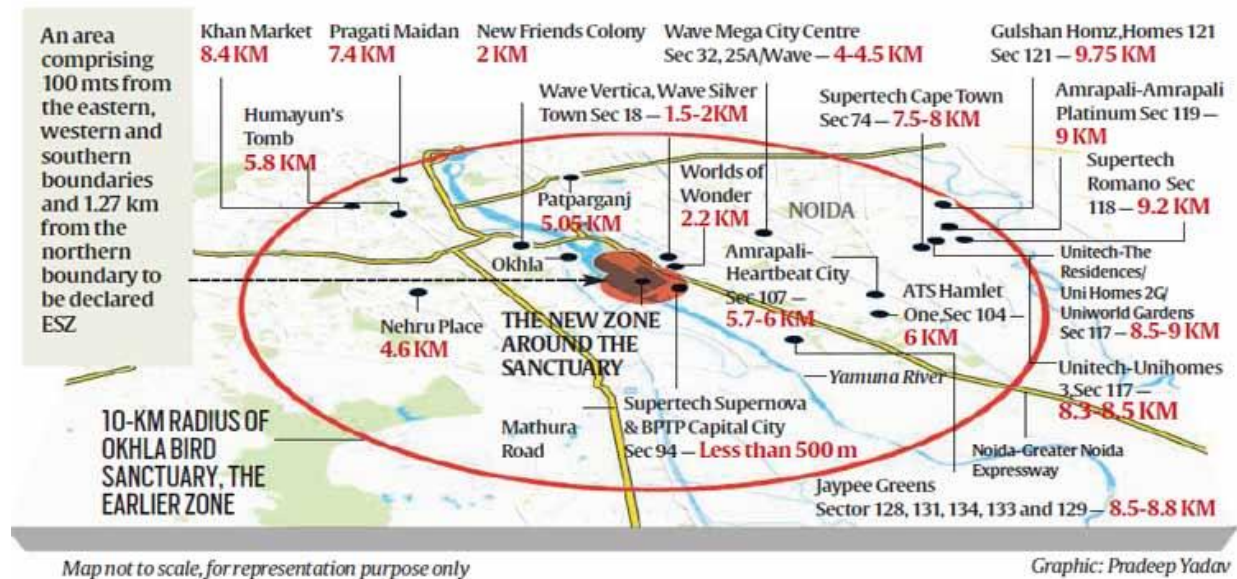
The National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) on Tuesday cleared a proposal to notify certain areas around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary in Noida as an ecosensitive zone (ESZ), ending the suspense over the status of thousands of ongoing construction projects that lie outside those areas.

The decision will come as a major relief to thousands of residential and commercial construction projects in Noida, which had been impacted by an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that had barred construction activity within a 10 km radius of the sanctuary till an ESZ was notified.

The wildlife board, whose mandate is to promote and conserve wildlife, gave its nod to the draft notification issued by the environment ministry last year.

The ministry had proposed an area comprising 100 mts from the eastern, western and southern boundaries of the sanctuary, and 1.27 km from the northern boundary, to be declared an eco-sensitive zone.

Places/projects now outside the new zone



When the setting up of ESZs in the country was originally proposed in 2002, it was suggested that all areas within a 10 km radius of a protected area should be declared eco-sensitive. Human activities in eco-sensitive zones are restricted and regulated, so that the negative impact of such activities on the fragile ecosystem within the protected areas is minimised.

However in 2005, the NBWL had recommended that the delineation of ESZs should actually be site-specific. The Uttar Pradesh government had in fact proposed last year that an area of 100 mts on all sides of the sanctuary be declared an ESZ.

After the environment ministry had come out with the draft notification last year, the NGT had asked it to consult the wildlife board before issuing the final notification.

Accordingly, the standing committee of the NBWL met on Tuesday morning to discuss the draft notification and expressed its agreement with it.

On the same day, the NGT — which was hearing a separate but related case — was informed about the status of the notification. The Tribunal has directed the environment ministry to issue the final notification within three weeks.

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said the notification would be out within a week. “It will be a big relief to people who have booked their homes in the area. Many people were paying EMIs as well as rent as they were not getting possession of their properties. The NGT’s orders have been followed,” he said.

However, the NGT said even the final notification would not be beyond legal challenge. The NGT’s Tuesday hearing was in a case filed by a Supreme Court lawyers’ housing society, which had sought directions to allow issuance of completion certificates for its 684-flat complex in Noida.

Responding to the plea, the NGT directed the environment ministry to “issue the final notification... within three weeks from the date of passing of this judgment”. It added that once the notification is finalised, “all the concerned stakeholders or aggrieved persons” would be at liberty to “challenge” it “in accordance with law”.

Timeline:

1990: Okhla Bird Sanctuary declared a “protected area” by UP government, but delineation of ecosensitive zone doesn’t take place

March 2005: National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) decides that delineation of zone would be site specific, “and regulatory in nature rather than prohibitory”

July 11, 2013: Plea to NGT regarding ‘illegal construction’ within ecosensitive zone put forward by petitioner Amit Kumar

October 2013: NGT passes orders that no construction activity will be permitted within 10-km radius of sanctuary

January 2014: UP government says ecosensitive zone around sanctuary should be 100 mts, after stating earlier that it should 1 km

April 3, 2014: NGT says new projects within 10-km radius of sanctuary shall not be cleared unless NBWL issues no objection certificate

June 10, 2014: Supreme Court dismisses plea by real estate firm Jaypee Infrastructure seeking that Noida Authority grant completion certificates to projects around sanctuary

June 27, 2014: A panel — constituted by the ministry and comprising representatives from NCT of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and MoEF — visits area, assesses situation and submits a report to ministry

July 2014: Delhi government proposes 100 mt radius as ecosensitive zone

September 24, 2014: Draft notification issued on ecosensitive zone

August 18, 2015: NBWL standing committee approves draft notification, NGT directs MoEF to finalise it within three weeks

Over 55,000 Home Buyers to Get Possession of Flats in Noida

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New Delhi: Over 55,000 home buyers will now get possession of their flats in Noida as the government issued the final notification demarcating the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around Okhla bird sanctuary, realtors' apex body CREDAI said on Wednesday.

The move to reduce the area of the eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary here would boost housing demand and prices in the Noida property market, CREDAI-NCR President Manoj Gaur said.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had restrained the authorities from issuing completion certificate to projects located within 10-km radius of the Okhla Bird Sanctuary or within the Eco-Sensitive Zone till the time clearance from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is obtained.

On Tuesday, the Environment Ministry had cleared the process of demarcating eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary.

The eco-sensitive zone area would be up to 100 metre from the Eastern, Western and Southern boundary and up to 1.27 km from the northern boundary of the Okhla Bird Sanctuary.

"It is a very good decision. Over 55,000 home buyers, whose homes were ready but could not occupy it, will now get possession of their flats as development authorities will start issuing completion certificates to affected projects," Mr Gaur said, adding that overall about 1 lakh

homes were being constructed in this area.

"This will have a positive impact on Noida market. Housing demand and prices will increase," Mr Gaur said.

Besides home buyers, he said the notification would help other stakeholders as well.

"Developers will get final payment from customers, state government can earn Rs 2,000 crore in stamp duty, Noida Development Authorities will get dues from builders. So it's a win-win situation for all," Mr Gaur said.

Housing projects of various developers, including Jaypee Green, DLF, ATS, 3C Developers and Supertech, were affected due to the NGT order.

Okhla Bird Sanctuary is at the Okhla barrage over Yamuna River and is situated in Noida Gautam Buddh Nagar district on Delhi-Uttar Pradesh state border.