

OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

8th AUGUST, 2022

**AUDIT REPORT ON PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF
MONUMENTS AND ANTIQUITIES PLACED IN PARLIAMENT**

Performance Audit Report on Follow-up on previous Performance Audit on Preservation and Conservation of Monuments and Antiquities – Report No. 10 of 2022 of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India - Union Government (Civil) - Performance Audit Report was tabled in the Parliament here today.

The Ministry of Culture (the Ministry) is responsible for preservation, conservation, promotion and dissemination of all forms of art and culture in the country. The Ministry, through ASI, is engaged in conservation, preservation and maintenance of the Centrally Protected Monuments (CPM) of national importance and excavations of ancient sites. In addition to ASI, National Culture Fund (NCF) and National Monument Authority (NMA) have also been established by the Government to support the process of conservation and protection of monuments.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) conducted a Performance Audit of “Preservation and Conservation of Monuments and Antiquities” during November 2020 to March 2021 to verify the actions taken on the areas of concern reported in the CAG’s Report No.18 of 2013 and to examine the extent of action taken on the 25 specific recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee.

Auditee units covered during the audit include Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), National Monument Authority, National Culture Fund, National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities and six National-level Museums. Seven States viz. Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and West Bengal were selected for examining the monuments, sites and offices of ASI viz. Circles, Branch offices, Institute of Archaeology, Site-Museums, Monuments and Excavation sites.

Some important audit observations relating to compliance of the recommendations of the PAC and other areas of concern are given below:

- Recommendations of the PAC on notification of rules and conservation activities under National Conservation Policy, notification of Archaeological Excavation

Policy, updation of Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, modification in Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act regarding system for recording footfall have not been carried out.

- National Monument Authority was constituted as a statutory body (in 2011) for providing no-objection certificates for undertaking construction activities in the prohibited/regulated area of the monuments. The basic objective was implementation of the statutory provisions through preparation of Heritage Bye-Laws (HBL) and Site-Plans for each monument. However, out of 3693 Centrally Protected Monuments, HBL for only 31 monuments have been notified while finalisation of HBL for 210 monuments were at different stages viz. notification, consultation, etc.
- ASI had no strategy or road-map (long term/medium term) to fulfill its mandate. The conservation activities were being undertaken on ad-hoc/annual basis. Central Advisory Board on Archaeology (CABA) conceptualised as apex body to advise ASI on matters relating to archaeology was inactive after March 2018.
- PAC had asked the Ministry/ASI to expedite the restructuring process of ASI and make effort in filling the current vacancies in human resources. However, overall vacancy position of ASI remained static at 29 *per cent* since earlier audit. At management levels and in important conservation branches of ASI, the position had further deteriorated.
- Ministry had intimated the PAC regarding its decision to increase the budget on exploration/excavation activities to five per cent of the total budget. Despite the assurance given by the Ministry, ASI's expenditure on excavation and exploration activities was still less than one per cent.
- National Culture Fund (NCF) was set up with a view to enable the participation and involvement of Corporate and Public Sectors in promoting, protecting and preserving the heritage. As against the primary corpus of ₹19.50 crore, endowment available with NCF rose to ₹76 crore by March 2021. However, the utilisation towards the objectives of NCF was less than 14 *per cent* (₹ 10.25 crore), which indicates absence of NCF's coordination with ASI.
- In view of recommendation of the PAC, ASI had revised its ticket and other charges for monuments and had included more monuments under the ticketed category. However, there were shortcomings in reconciliation and financial control mechanism.
- National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities was launched by the Government (in 2007) to prepare a national database of all monuments and antiquities in the country in five years. Its period was extended for another five-years (2012-17) and later merged with ASI. Out of 4 lakh plus heritage structures and 58 lakh plus antiquities, only 1.84 lakh monuments and 16.83 lakh antiquities have been documented so far.

- Discrepancies in the list of Centrally Protected Monuments and issues related with de-notification of missing monuments (as reported earlier) were still existing despite assurance that efforts would be made for their rectification.
 - Joint physical inspection of selected monuments viz. World Heritage Sites, *Adarsh* and Ticketed Monuments, Living Monuments, Baolis, Kos-Minar, etc. revealed (i) absence of public amenities viz. public toilet, drinking water, space for vehicle parking, ramp, guide, security etc. (ii) shortcomings in conservation works at monuments and management of heritage gardens.
 - At selected national level museums and site museums under ASI, concerns related to antiquity management viz. non-formation of Art Purchase Committees, shortcomings in acquisition, accession, verification, display and rotation of artefacts, their storage, preservation and security were noticed.
 - PAC (Report No.39 of 2016) had asked the Ministry/ASI to draw action plan under the excavation policy and ensure adequate allocation and effective utilisation of funds for these activities. It was noted that ASI had no action plan based on its exploration and excavation policy. ASI did not have a centralised information/monitoring system for displaying excavation proposals and their status. Writing of excavation reports was pending for more than 60 years. The expenditure on the exploration activities was less than one *per cent*.
 - The action taken by the Ministry/ASI on the recommendations made by PAC (Reports No.39 of 2016 and No.118 of 2018) was quite inadequate.
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