

Chapter 8: Antiquities Management

Antiquities are mostly acquired and maintained by various national/State level museums across the country. Besides, antiquities found during excavations are kept and displayed by ASI at its site-museums.

8.1 National Level Museums

Under the Ministry, seven national level museums function as its subordinate offices or autonomous bodies. The Ministry had intimated the PAC that no uniform laid down procedure for management of antiquities was being followed in these museums as they were independent entities working under the direction of their Board/Society. Ministry had, however, reported to the PAC regarding steps being taken by it towards drafting and finalisation of a uniform policy for acquisition of art objects. As pointed out in Para 3.1, against the recommendation of PAC, uniform policy/procedure for all museums (except security policy mentioned in Para 7.3) had not been framed. The Ministry had also informed the PAC regarding digitation process of art objects in the museums through *JATAN* software.

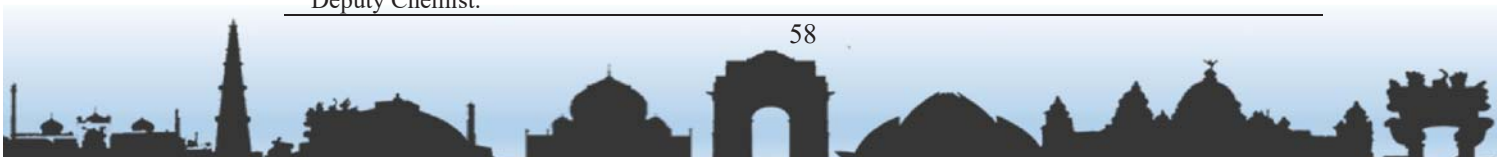
In the previous Report, several observations in antiquity management viz. acquisition, registration, documentation, accession, physical verification, storage, display, security and human resources were made. Though the PAC had not made any specific recommendations for any national level museums, areas of concern noticed in their working during the follow-up audit are discussed below:

8.1.1 National Museum, Delhi

The Nation Museum, Delhi (NM), which was formally inaugurated in August 1949, has around 2.06 lakh works of exquisite art of both Indian and foreign origin, covering more than 5000 years of cultural heritage, in its possession. During the period 2014-15 to 2020-21, annual average fund allocation of NM was ₹ 36.65 crore against which average annual expenditure was ₹ 34.62 crore. Audit noted that concerns in the functioning of NM raised by two Committees viz. *Varadarajan* Committee (2004) and *Yechury* Committee (2011) and also mentioned in previous Report were still existing. In this regard, following observations are being made:

- The sanctioned strength of NM, which was 276 at the time of the earlier audit, was reduced⁶² (July 2019) by the Ministry to 174, against which 36 posts were found (December 2020) vacant. Some of the posts viz. Additional Director General, Joint Director General, were vacant since 2014.

⁶² Including nine posts of Curator/Deputy Curator and five posts of Conservator/Deputy Conservator, Deputy Chemist.

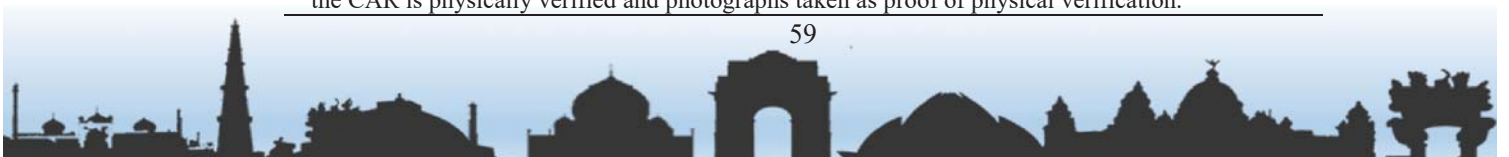


- Except acquisition of objects through gifts, NM had not purchased any artefact since the period covered in the previous Report *i.e.* 2007. It was noticed that the Art Purchase/Acquisition Committee of NM was defunct since 1997 and was not reconstituted, resulting in no new addition in the collection of the museum.
- NM had no policy/guidelines/instructions for handing/taking over of objects including their physical verification. Delay in handing/taking over of objects and their physical verification was noticed in various sections of NM. In a statement made by NM (September 2019) after the digitisation of all the artefacts and their further linking with *JATAN* Software (along with details provided in accession register), the verification process would be considered as completed⁶³. However, out of 2.06 lakh artefacts, NM had digitised records of 1.73 lakh objects, of which photography/digitisation of only 0.81 lakh art objects was completed (January 2021).
- The *Yechury* Committee, while pointing out absence of physical verification (since 2003) of artefacts in NM, had felt that when the verification process would be taken up, some of the objects might be reported missing. The issue of discrepancy in the number of artefacts in NM was also included in the previous Report. During the current audit, it was noted that in various sections of NM, the number of objects reported were different from those mentioned by the two Committees. Further, instances of missing/untraceable artefacts in some sections of NM were also noticed.

The section-wise position regarding delay in handing/taking over/verification process and missing/untraceable artefacts are provided in **Annexe 8.1**. Some instances are illustrated below:

- In the Numismatic Section only ten *per cent* of coins have been physically verified. The 15 antique coins recovered (2008) from the almirah of an ex-Curator as discussed in the previous Report had still not been verified and accessioned with museum records. Due to inadequate verification, there was no record to correlate coins removed from the reserve and displayed in the gallery.
- In the Pre-History Section, only 1942 artefacts against 5437 objects were handed/taken over. The Curator had no information on whereabouts of the remaining artefacts. In Pre-Columbian & Western Art Section, against 2909 objects (identified by *Yechury* Committee), only 1208 were reported.

⁶³ In a submission made (September 2019) by the National Museum with High Court, it was explained that as a part of the digitisation project through *JATAN*, all the information appearing in the Classified Accession Register (CAR) are entered into the system. Thereafter, every object appearing the CAR is physically verified and photographs taken as proof of physical verification.



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Similarly, in Anthropology Section, 501 objects were reported missing/gg untraceable.

- In the previous Report, it was pointed out that due to irregularities in the Accession Register of the Manuscript Section, its charge was not handed over to the new Curator. As detailed in the **Annexe 8.1**, 35 per cent of manuscripts (4871) have still not been physically verified.
- In the Painting Section, the complete handing/taking over process was pending since 2016. Audit noticed that a painting described in the accession register as *Thanka* had a missing *Buddha* picture.

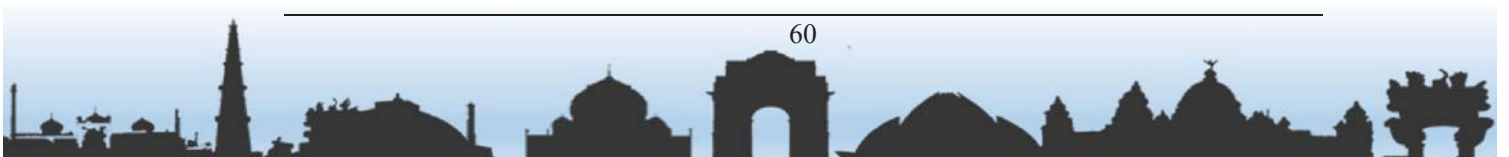


The Section reported (March 2021) to audit that two paintings have been found marked with a single accession number. It had also reported (January 2020) to the museum authority that various artefacts of the Section were missing. However, there was no record of action taken by the NM (March 2021). Similarly, in the Pre-History Reserve, objects were found lying in the reserve without any accession number.

- NM had 26 galleries of which, Arms & Armours, Manuscripts, Paintings, Pre-Columbian & Western Art, Jewellery, Epigraphy and Textile galleries were found closed. The *Yechury* Committee had noted that apart from reasons of up-gradation/renovation, shortages of staff and display materials, galleries have also been closed for pending cases involving theft and vigilance matters. It was noted that some of the galleries *viz.* Pre-Columbian & Western Art, Manuscript, mentioned closed in previous Report have still not been opened on the pretext of their up-gradation. Further, in most of the sections, only upto nine per cent of art objects were on display.

On this issue, NM replied (April 2021) that the closure of the galleries was not on account of pending cases involving theft and vigilance. It further submitted that low percentage of antiquities on display was due to display area being less. Fact remains that the low percentage of display of artefacts and closure of galleries deprives the general public from experiencing our rich heritage.

- As mentioned in the previous Report, in the reserve collections of different Sections of NM, security cameras were also not available. Audit noted that the



art objects were being kept in rooms/sections (e.g. Paintings, Central Asian collection) in wooden almirah without ensuring their fire-safety.

Aurel Stein Collection–Central Asian Antiquities

Aurel Stein (1862-1943) was an archaeologist, known for his explorations and discoveries. Amongst the non-Indian collections of NM, the Central Asian Arts Collection is a significant one as it has some of the most outstanding wall paintings, silk banners, sculptures, art objects, etc. This collection was explored and collected by Aurel Stein, during 1900-1916, on three major expeditions.



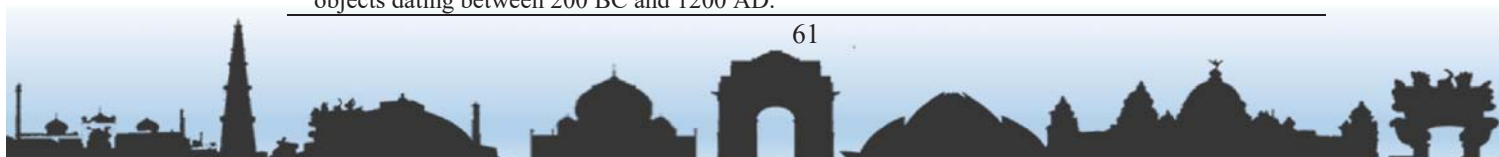
In the previous Audit Report, it was pointed out that a part of this collection consisting of 700 art objects was loaned to Victoria & Albert (V&A) Museum, London by Government of India (through ASI) between 1923 and 1933. The loaned art objects have not been received back⁶⁴. It was noted that no effort was made to retrieve the collection from V&A Museum. Further, some of the objects from this collection were still lying in the conservation lab of NM (for over 50 years).

Source: CAG Report No. 18 of 2013 (Page 142)

- During the follow-up audit, it was noted that priceless statues of NM were lying in an unsecured environment, gathering dust as depicted in following photographs and **Annexe 8.2**.



⁶⁴ According to V&A website [V&A The Stein Collection \(vam.ac.uk\)](http://vam.ac.uk) the collection, on loan from the Government of India, includes nearly 600 textile fragments and over 70 ceramic and Buddhist objects dating between 200 BC and 1200 AD.



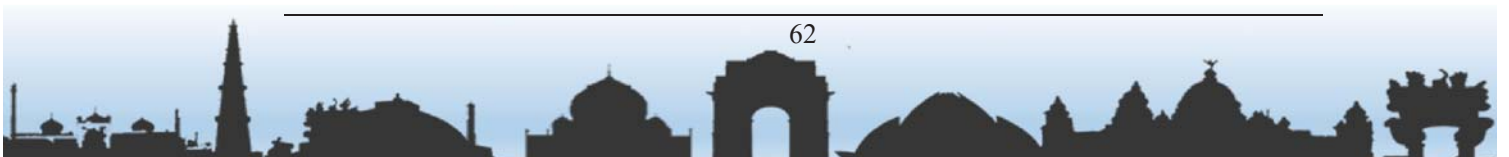
8.1.2 Asiatic Society, Mumbai

The Mumbai Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society was founded in 1826 by merging the Literary Society of Bombay with the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Asiatic Society, Mumbai (ASM) is a Library and Research Society in possession of Buddhist relics, antique coins, manuscripts etc. During audit it was noted that except for coins, ASM was not maintaining any Accession Register. The work regarding cataloguing of coins, started in 2014-15, was still incomplete and the physical verification of coins and other antiquities was pending since 2008.

8.1.3 Salarjung Museum, Telangana

The Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad (SJM) was established in 1951 and was declared as an institution of national importance in 1961. It has a collection of art objects and antiquities acquired from all over the globe. Audit observed the following during the period 2013-14 to 2020-21:

- SJM Act, 1961, provides for a Board to manage the museum efficiently and to plan, promote, organise and implement the development of the museum. The Board had met only twice during the period against the mandatory four meetings (at least) in a year adding to a total 28 required meetings. As such, apex level advise for effective management of the museum was not available. Shortfall of similar nature in the scheduled meetings of sub-committees *i.e.* Executive Committee (71.43 *per cent*), Finance Committee (35.71 *per cent*) and Building Advisory Committee ((85.71 *per cent*) was also noticed.
- The sanctioned strength of SJM was 166 at the time of earlier audit which was reduced to 140 in 2020-21. Against the reduced strength, the overall shortage of manpower (ranging from 20 months to 16 years) was 46 *i.e.* 32.86 *per cent* (including 21 posts of technical staff). SJM replied (June 2021) that due to budget constraints, posts could not be filled.
- During the period 2014-15 to 2020-21, annual average fund allocation of SJM was ₹ 24.33 crore. As the grants were not being allocated separately for preservation and conservation activities, such works were being undertaken on the basis of priority and availability. During this period, (2014-20) expenditure on preservation and conservation activities (including expenditure on upgradation of security system, digitisation, etc.) ranged from 0.09 to 5.83 *per cent*.
- SJM had not acquired any new artefacts and its Art Acquisition Committee was not constituted. SJM replied (June 2021) that there was no acquisition after 1992 and the Committee was not constituted as it was felt that no new item would fit in SJM collection and the process would involve huge costs.



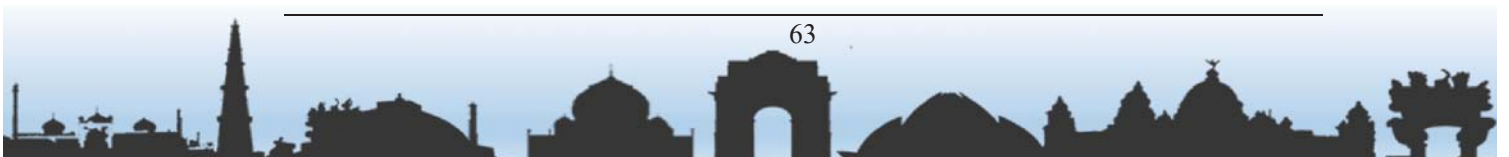
- SJM was in possession of 46,216 art objects, 8,191 manuscripts and 69,225 books. Out of 46,216 art objects, 16,606 objects were displayed by it and 29,610 (64 *per cent*) were kept in reserve. It was noted that SJM had no rotation policy. In this regard, SJM replied that in view of gallery designs, prime and limited displayed artefacts, objects from reserves were being displayed wherever possible or on special occasions/exhibitions. The reply was not tenable, as absence of rotation/display policy results in many of the art objects lying in reserve without being ever put on display and, thereby, depriving the visitors from an enhanced experience.
- Physical verification certificates in respect of art objects were issued without date, name and seal of the verifying authority as depicted in **Annexe 8.3**. Further, SJM had no guidelines for evaluation of genuineness of art objects.

SJM replied (April 2021) that the genuineness of art objects was being verified during the process of their physical verification and the aspect of formulation of relevant guidelines would be placed before the Board for approval. Reply of SJM was, however, not acceptable as the physical verification process was a routine procedure and not undertaken with the objective to assess the genuineness of the objects.

- SJM had digitised 100 *per cent* of art objects and 54 *per cent* of manuscripts. It carried out RFID tagging of all books and manuscripts. However, in respect of art objects, RFID tagging of only 10,000 objects (22 *per cent*) was conducted. SJM stated that the digitisation work of manuscripts would be completed in the next two years while the limited numbers of RFID tagging was on account of the Ministry's project quota.
- SJM was unable to up-grade its existing CCTV cameras as recommended by its security agency *i.e.* Central Industrial Security Force due to budget constraints. Further, in the absence of policy/guidelines, expenditure of SJM on preservation and conservation activities (including up-gradation of security system, digitisation, etc.) ranged between 0.09 and 5.83 *per cent* of its total expenditure.

8.1.4 Victoria Memorial Hall Museum, Kolkata

The Victoria Memorial Hall Museum, Kolkata (VMH) was established under the Victoria Memorial Act, 1903 and was declared as institution of national importance in 1935. VMH has a collection of sketches and drawing, coins and medals, arms and armour, books and manuscripts, etc. Audit observed the following during the period 2014-15 to 2020-21:



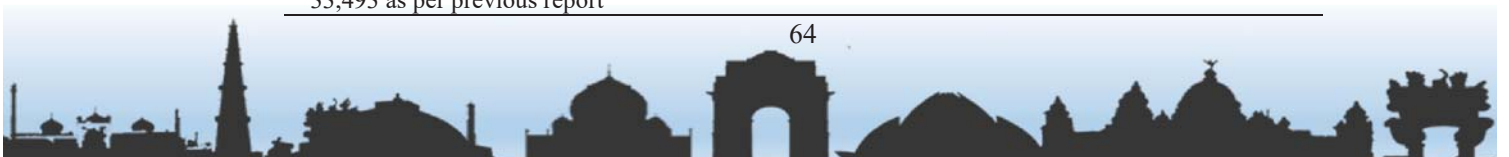
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- The vacancy position of VMH had increased from 30.1 *per cent* (during earlier audit) to 53.7 *per cent*. Out of 175 sanctioned posts, 94 posts were vacant for period ranging from three months to 32 years.
- During the period 2014-15 to 2019-20, annual average fund allocation of VMH was ₹ 37.49 crore against which average annual utilisation was ₹ 27.37 crore, indicating poor utilisation of allocated grants.
- Since the period covered in previous Report *i.e.* 2007, VMH had not acquired any new artefacts. VMH was in possession of 33,497 artefacts⁶⁵, of which 28,394 (85 *per cent*) have been accessioned and 26,611 (79 *per cent*) were digitised/documentated. Apart from incomplete documentation, the Accession Register of VMH was found to be in bad condition without any soft copy backup. Also, only 18 *per cent* objects have been tagged for RFID.
- In the previous Report it was pointed out that out of 28,394 artefacts with VMH, 18,979 remained unverified in respect to their antique and intrinsic value. It was noted that during 2017-18, VMH had conducted physical verification of its objects. However, concerned report was not prepared by it.

VMH, in its reply, assured that initiative would be taken to complete physical verification and authentication of its collection.

- Out of 33,497 objects available with it, VMH had displayed only 817 objects (2.44 *per cent*) in the galleries (March 2020). VMH stated that efforts were made to rotate the artefacts in display through temporary exhibition, objects-of-the-month display and changes in permanent exhibition. Facts remain that the number of objects displayed in the gallery was very low. Also, various galleries of VMH *viz.* Portrait gallery, Indian School of Art, Queen's Hall, etc. had remained closed for period upto 23 months on account of their renovation or repair.
- *Rabindra Bharati* Society had provided 5,103 paintings to VMH (2011) on loan. According to the terms of agreement (2007), VMH was to pay loan amount of ₹ 10 lakh annually to *Rabindra Bharati* Society. However, only nine paintings were displayed and VMH was unable to utilise the remaining paintings. Further, physical verification of 303 acquired paintings had not been carried out by VMH.
- Against the recommendation of its Security Committee for two Baggage Scanners and 13 Hand-held Metal Detectors, VMH was in possession of only one and six such machines. The museum had not installed any Air-conditioners in its storerooms while CCTV cameras had been installed in only three out of eight stores. VMH had no fire alarm, smoke detectors, sprinklers, etc. and there

⁶⁵ 33,493 as per previous report



was no firefighting equipment in the stores. Despite purchase of four data loggers (March 2015) for recording environmental parameters, same have not been put to use.

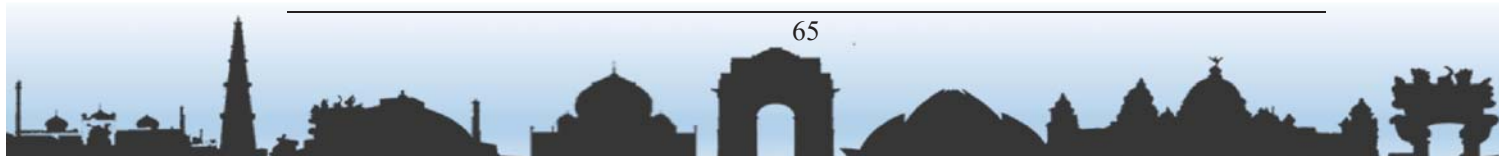
8.1.5 Indian Museum, Kolkata

The Indian Museum, Kolkata (IM) was founded in 1814 and is the largest and the oldest institution of its kind in the Asia Pacific Region. The Museum is a repository of both Indian and trans-Indian objects displayed through 35 galleries. In the previous Report, it was pointed out that the Institute had failed to formulate a uniform conservation policy resulting in deterioration of its artefacts. In this regard, IM stated that the policy was awaiting approval of the Ministry since 2015.

During the period 2014-15 to 2019-20, annual average fund allocation of IM was ₹ 22.25 crore against which average annual utilisation was ₹ 21.36 crore. During 2018-19 and 2019-20, the allocation had shown *percentage* growth of 64.5 and 88.2 respectively. Other observations on the working of IM are illustrated below:

- The vacancy position of IM had increased from 28.7 *per cent* (during earlier audit) to 58.9 *per cent*. Out of 209 sanctioned posts, 123 posts were vacant for a period ranging from six months to 25 years.
- IM had not acquired any new artefacts. IM was in possession of 1,08,000 artefacts, of which 72,984 (67 *per cent*) have been accessioned and 46,008 (43 *per cent*) were digitised. IM had photo documented its 60,224 objects while only eight *per cent* objects have been tagged for RFID. Further, repetition of accession numbers was observed as different sections were maintaining their own accession registers.
- In the previous Report, it was pointed out that physical verification of objects in IM (started in 2005) was completed for 38 *per cent* of the artefacts (upto March 2012). During audit it was noted that 11 *per cent* of the objects had still not been verified (March 2020). Further, survey to identify the objects requiring conservation was also not conducted by IM. Instances of improper conservation work noticed at IM are depicted below:

	
<p>Patch work was noticed in the Gajasurasanhara Murti of Shiva</p>	<p>The red sand stone Yakshi had been entirely changed into black.</p>



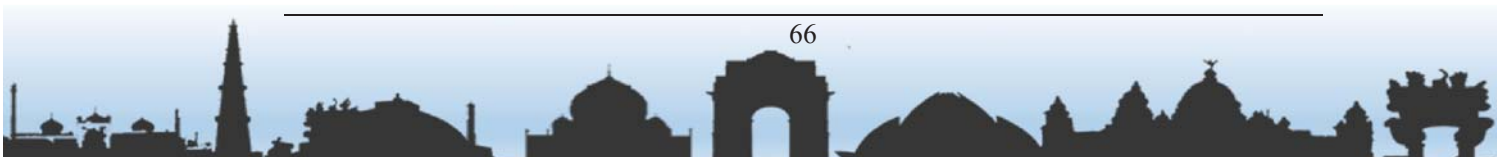
IM accepted the observation on improper patch work. In respect of *Yakshi*, it stated that this was due to darkening of the coating, with added pigment. It also mentioned possibility of deposit of pollutants, as the statue was situated near to a road.

- Out of 1,08,000 objects available with it, IM had displayed 2,554 objects (2.36 *per cent*) in the gallery (March 2020). In this regard, IM replied that in the public interest, rotation of artefacts was maintained by means of holding exhibition inside and outside the museum arena. However, there was no rotation policy and number of objects displayed in the gallery was very low. Further, due to renovation/repair related issues, some of the galleries *viz.* Cultural Anthropology Gallery, Bronze Gallery, Pre-Proto History, South East Asian Gallery had remained closed during the period covered under audit. Status of artefacts displayed at the galleries is depicted in **Annexe 8.2**.
- Air-conditioners for controlling the ideal temperature and CCTV cameras had not been installed in the stores. The museum had no fire alarms, smoke detectors, sprinklers and fire extinguishers have been provided in only five stores (out of ten).

8.1.6 Asiatic Society, Kolkata

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata (ASK) was founded in 1784 by Sir William Jones and was declared as an institution of national importance in 1984. ASK has large collections of paintings, manuscripts, coins etc. During the period 2014-15 to 2020-21, annual average fund allocation of ASK was ₹ 24.09 crore against which average annual utilisation was ₹ 22.29 crore. In respect of ASK following was noted:

- The vacancy position of ASK had increased from 17.5 *per cent* (during earlier audit) to 31.9 *per cent*. Out of 254 sanctioned posts, 81 posts were vacant for period ranging between two months and 24 years seven months.
- Based on recommendations of Art Purchase Committee, ASK had acquired 166 art objects (including 35 gifts) during 2015 and 2017. However, due to absence of defined procedures for ensuring the genuineness of acquired antiquities, it was able to verify only 10 objects through ASI.
- ASK was in possession of 3,01,626 artefacts, of which 2,86,363 (95 *per cent*) were accessioned. However, ASK had digitised and photo documented only 9,165 (five *per cent*) and 1,774 (three *per cent*) objects respectively. It assured audit regarding formation of a committee to finalise the remaining work. In addition to poor documentation process, ASK did not have any back-up copy of its Accession Registers.
- In the previous Report, it was mentioned that rare coins available with ASK had never been counted and physically verified. During the follow-up audit, it was noted that the position regarding number of available coins and their



verification had remained unchanged. Except paintings and manuscripts, busts, stone sculptures, coins had never been surveyed by ASK for their conservation. Further, in respect of ten *per cent* of manuscripts identified for immediate restoration, work had been delayed for last two years. Conservation status of artefacts at ASK is also depicted in **Annexe 8.2**.

- No unique pattern of accessioning was found to be followed by ASK⁶⁶. The maps held by ASK had not been assigned any accession numbers.
- Security equipment *viz.* Door-Framed Metal Detectors, Baggage Scanners, Walky-talkies, etc. were not available with ASK and it had not undertaken any exercise to assess its requirement. Out of 180 CCTV cameras installed by the ASK, 80 were non-functional. Except fire extinguishers, no fire alarms, smoke detectors, sprinklers etc. had been installed.

8.2 ASI Site-Museums

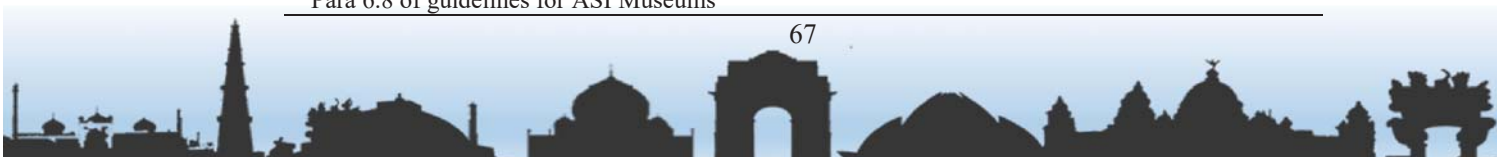
The ASI had 50 archaeological site-museums under its jurisdiction spread all over the country. In respect of site-museums, Ministry had intimated the PAC that a broad policy prepared in 1915 was being re-examined and re-defined. It informed that a draft document on vision, mission and guidelines for archaeological museums is being finalised. However, as observed in Para 3.1, the guidelines, being implemented for ASI site-museums was not a comprehensive document as recommended by PAC. ASI had incurred expenditure aggregating ₹ 58.34 crore on the maintenance of its site-museums during the period 2013-14 to 2019-20. During the follow-up audit, 23 ASI site-museums were examined and the findings are discussed below:

8.2.1 ASI had five site-museums in Madhya Pradesh at Chanderi, Gwalior, Khajuraho, Sanchi and Shivpuri.

- The overall shortage of men-in-position at the five site-museums ranged between 25 and 67 *per cent* of sanctioned strength. Against, the mandatory posts⁶⁷ of one Assistant Superintendent Archaeologists (ASA) and two Assistant Archaeologist (AA) for each site-museum, only three posts of ASA and AA (to look after all five site-museums) have been sanctioned.
- None of the site-museums had any rotation policy for displaying the objects. In all the museums, except Chanderi, total objects kept in reserve ranged from 76 to 99 *per cent*. During 2013-14 to 2019-20, physical verification of objects had

⁶⁶ Objects accessioned according to their serial numbers, year of accession or their types

⁶⁷ Para 6.8 of guidelines for ASI Museums



not been conducted in four site-museums, except at Sanchi (conducted in 2015).

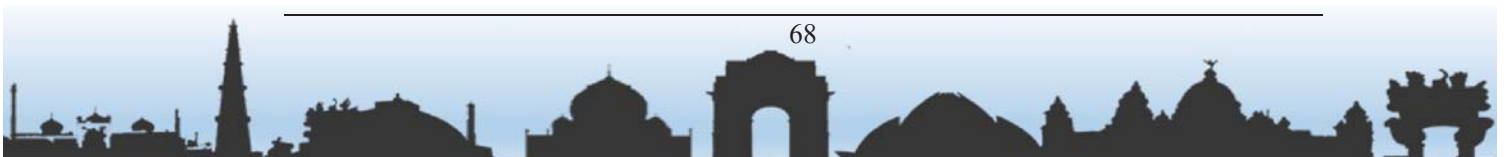
- In three site-museums *viz.* Chanderi, Gwalior and Shivpuri, description in respect of many artefacts kept in galleries was not available. At site-museum, Gwalior, photo documentation of many art objects and mention of their accession numbers in documented photos were not made.
- Antiquities kept in reserve at site-museum, Gwalior were found in a deplorable condition. At site-museum, Chanderi, 407 objects were displayed in the open without any CCTV camera. As the whole area was covered with a thin wire fencing, their display in the open is fraught with the risk of theft/loss or deterioration due to weather.

Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that they have posted ASA for site-museums in Madhya Pradesh since December 2021. Further, all in-charge site-museums have been directed to regularly rotate and verify the exhibits.

8.2.2 ASI had three site-museums at its Kolkata Circle *viz.* (i) *Hazarduari* Palace Museum, Murshidabad, (ii) *Cooch Behar* Palace Museum, Cooch Behar, and (iii) Archaeological Museum, Tamluk.

- *Cooch Behar* Palace Museum had accessioned only 4.9 *per cent* of available 6,963 artefacts. This was due to non-verification of genuineness of available antiquities. Further, in Archaeological Museum, Tamluk, only 3.6 *per cent* of available 8,074 objects have been digitised.
- The three site-museums were found to be displaying only 3.2 *per cent* to 13.5 *per cent* of the objects kept by them. There was absence of rotation policy for displaying the artefacts. The physical verification of antiquities had not been conducted during 2013-14 to 2019-20.
- Though more than 87 *per cent* of the artefacts were kept in reserve there was absence of storage facilities with effective air-conditioning, humidity control system, CCTV camera, etc.
- During joint physical inspection of these site-museums, public amenities *viz.* guide service, parking, facility for physically challenged, complaint register, etc. were not found available.

Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that digitisation of all the three museums under Kolkata Circle including provision of humidity control, surveillance systems, and amenities would be completed by March 2023.



8.2.3 ASI had six site-museums in Karnataka at Srirangapatna, Halebeedu, Aihole, Badami, Vijayapura and Hampi.

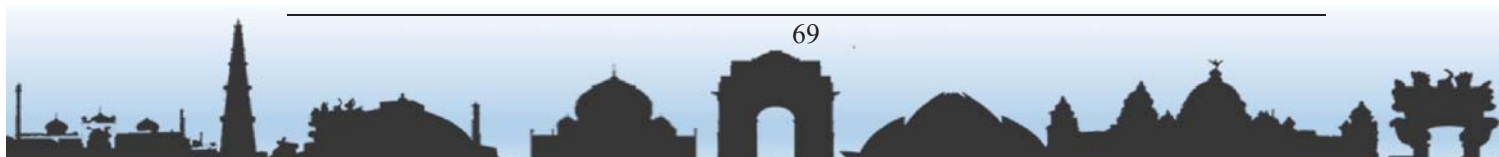
- None of the site-museum had any rotation policy for displaying the objects. In all the museums, except Badami, total objects kept in reserve ranged from 53 to 94 *per cent*. In Vijayapura, site-museum none of the object was digitised.
- In four site-museums *viz.* Aihole, Badami, Halebeedu and Hampi, description in respect of many artefacts displayed was not available. At site-museum, Halebeedu, an artefact (wooden doorsill) was displayed without taking it into accession. Similarly, in Aihole site-museum, sculptures were found lying near the boundary wall and backyard without their being taken into accession.
- At Halebeedu site-museum, dust and sand had gathered over the sculptures displayed in the gallery. Fungus and moss had accumulated over most of the sculptures/artefacts lying in the open reserve collection and required chemical conservation as depicted in the following photographs:



- At Halebeedu site-museum, undocumented artefacts had been kept in a room with a broken gate. Out of 12 CCTV cameras, two were not functional. Also, the fire extinguishers in the museums were not functional.

Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that all sculptures lying in the Aihole museum premises had been documented and shifted to a safer location. Further sculptures in the Halebeedu museum were being scientifically preserved.

8.2.4 ASI had five site-museums in Delhi Circle (four at Red Fort and one at *Purana Qila*). However, ASA was not posted in any of them. In the previous Report, it was pointed out that four stolen antiquities of the Indian War Memorial Museum, Red Fort were lying with the Daryaganj Police Station since 1989.



Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that they had posted ASA for site-museums in Delhi Circle since December 2021 and had received two antiquities from the Police Station.

8.2.5 ASI had three site-museums at Konark, Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri in Odisha.

- Physical verification of antiquities at site-museum Konark was not conducted during the period 2016-17 to 2019-20. The Circle office assured that the verification would be done soon. It was noted that an Expert Committee had reported (December 2015) 13 antiquities to be untraceable. However, no effort was made to trace the missing antiquities.
- Audit noticed that antiquities of site-museum were lying at the monument (Sun Temple, Konark) instead of being placed at the museum.
- None of the site-museums had any rotation policy for displaying the objects. In Ratnagiri site-museum, out of 3,540 artefacts, 92.9 *per cent* (3,288) were kept in reserve. Only 1.7 *per cent* (60) of the objects were digitised. Further, Circle office intimated that the digitisation work would be taken up after approval from ASI Headquarters regarding engagement of required manpower.

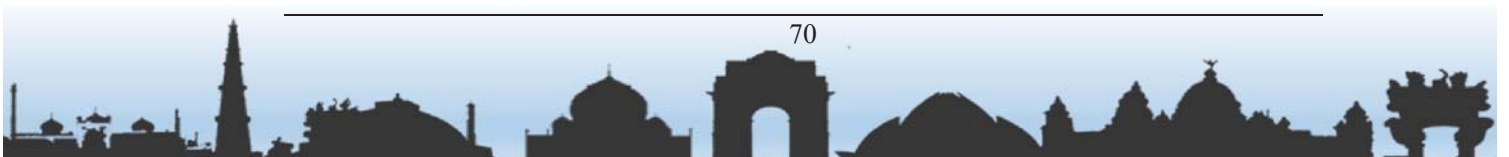
Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that all museums had been directed to adopt rotation policy and verify antiquities once in a year. Further, the expert Committee had traced four antiquities while efforts for others were being made. It also intimated that artefacts kept in the open at Konark were being properly displayed and their digitisation work was in progress.

8.3 Other Museums under ASI

Audit observations from other museums/repository under ASI are discussed below:

8.3.1 Central Antiquity Collection

The Central Antiquity Collection (CAC) at *Purana Qila*, Delhi was established by ASI in 1960 for storing antiquities/artefacts collected during surveys, explorations, excavations and confiscations. CAC is a rich repository of rare antiquities collected from various parts of the country. Audit noted that some of the confiscated and retrieved antiquities have been put on display for general public (since August 2019). Notable improvement in storing of artefacts at CAC reserve since the previous Report was also noticed as depicted in the following photographs:



		
<p>Condition of antiquities at CAC –previous Report</p>	<p>New gallery and reserve collection of CAC –follow-up audit</p>	

However, there was still no provision for controlled air environment for the antiquities. CCTV cameras and other security equipment were not installed at CAC reserve. Despite having a huge collection of AA/A (very rare and rare) category of antiquities, CAC was managed by only one Assistant Archaeologist.

8.3.2 Maritime Archaeology Museum

The PAC had desired that maritime museums displaying antiquities and monuments of India's great maritime past may be established at appropriate location. The Ministry/ASI had informed (April 2016) the PAC about their proposal regarding opening of maritime museum in Mumbai. Though no such museum was found opened by the Ministry/ASI, it was noted that Ministry of Shipping had initiated (February 2020), construction of National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat which proposed to house National Maritime Museum, Maritime Heritage based theme park, Maritime Research Institute, etc.

8.3.3 Development of sculpture sheds as Site-Museums

In the previous Report it was pointed out that despite recommendation made in 2009 by a sub-committee of CABA regarding converting the existing sculpture sheds and other sites into site-museums, progress had not been made. Audit had pointed out that there was no progress in this regard.

During the follow-up audit a joint physical inspection at Rabdentse site, Sikkim (Kolkata Circle) visited during the previous audit was undertaken. As reported earlier, the artefacts were still being placed at the shed without accession numbers while glass boxes built for the purpose were empty. Though the Circle office stated that this was only a sculpture shed, it was unable to take any corrective action on the issue highlighted earlier.



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Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that comprehensive documentation as per NMMA format was in progress. However, reason for not taking any action on observation made in previous Report was not provided.

8.3.4 ASI's Children Museum

The ASI's Children Museum, is a replica museum located in New Delhi. The Museum was specifically created to educate children on the cultural, archaeological and historical heritage of India through approximately 50 numbers of replicated structures of famous antiquities. ASI reported (December 2020) that annual footfall to the Museum was 1,500-2,000. During inspection it was noted that various replicas were displayed in the Children Museum without showing their cultural history. Further, no dedicated staff or budget was being provided for the Museum and ASI had not undertaken any initiative for its publicity or awareness.

Ministry/ASI stated (January 2022) that process of refurbishment of the Children Museum was under progress.

Conclusions:

In the national level museums and site-museums under the Ministry/ASI, issues related to management of antiquities viz. shortage of staff, lack of digitisation and accession of artefacts, their display, verification, conservation, storage and security were still existing. These concerns already pointed out in the previous Report were affecting the effective working of these museums

