



Madhya Pradesh HC Orders ASI Survey of Bhojshala Complex

Why in News?

Recently, the Madhya Pradesh High Court directed the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) to conduct a scientific survey of the **Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex** situated in the **Dhar district**.

Key Points

- The site is an ASI-protected, 11th Century CE monument. Under an agreement with the ASI, puja is performed in the temple by Hindus every Tuesday and Namaz offered every Friday.
- The court has ruled or decided that **there is a necessity to clarify or reveal the true essence and identity of the entire monument** under the maintenance of the Central government.
- The court concluded that it is the **constitutional as well as statutory obligation** of the **ASI to hold the scientific survey of the site** at the earliest **under Section 16 the Monument Act, 1958**.
 - The court asked the ASI to **photograph and videograph the survey** as well as unlock and open the locked/sealed rooms, halls of the whole complex and prepare a complete inventory of each and every artifact, idol, deity, or any structure found in the said locked, sealed halls, and rooms, and submit the same along with the respective photographs.
- This archaeological site at Dhar also bears **ancient inscriptions** that attracted the early attention of **colonial Indologists, historians and administrators**.
- **John Malcolm** mentioned Dhar in 1822, along with building projects such as the dams planned and completed by King Bhoja.
- Earlier in September 2023, the guards reportedly found an idol of **Goddess Vagdevi**. However, the administration had denied the claim of the idols 'appearing' and removed it.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI, under the **Ministry of Culture**, is the premier organization for the **archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation**.
- It administers more than **3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites** and remains of national importance.
- Its activities include carrying out **surveys of antiquarian remains**, exploration and **excavation of archaeological sites**, conservation and maintenance of protected monuments etc.
- It was **founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham**- the first Director-General of ASI. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".

Bhojshala Complex

- The Bhojshala literally translates from Sanskrit as the '**Hall of King Bhoja**' is an historic temple located in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh.
- King Bhoja hailed from the **Paramara dynasty** of central India, and was renowned as a patron of education and the arts, to whom major Sanskrit works on poetics, yoga and architecture are attributed.

- The 11th-century Bhojshala is an ASI-protected monument. Hindus believe it is a temple of Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati) but the Muslim side disputes it claiming that it is Kamal Maula Mosque.

Note

The **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958** provides for the **preservation of ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites** and remains of national importance.

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