



ASI to Delist Lost Monuments

For Prelims: [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#), **Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act)**, [Indian Heritage Sites](#)

For Mains: Issues Related to Heritage Conservation in India, Indian Heritage Sites, Government Policies & Interventions

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

The [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has decided to delist **18 “centrally protected monuments”** because it has assessed that they do not have national importance.

- These 18 monuments are part of an earlier list of monuments that the **ASI had said were “untraceable”**.

Which Monuments are Being Delisted?

- Among the monuments that face delisting now are a mediaeval highway milestone recorded as **Kos Minar No.13 at Mujessar village in Haryana, Barakhamba Cemetery in Delhi, Gunner Burkill’s tomb in Jhansi district**, a cemetery at Gaughat in Lucknow, and the Telia Nala Buddhist ruins in Varanasi.
 - The precise location of these monuments, or their current physical state, is not known.
- This is the first such large-scale delisting exercise in several decades. The ASI **currently has 3,693 monuments under its purview**, which will fall to 3,675 once the current delisting is completed.

What does Delisting a Monument Mean?

- **Removal from ASI's Purview:**
 - The delisted monument will no longer be conserved, protected, and maintained by the **ASI**.
 - It will effectively be removed from the ASI's list of centrally protected monuments.
- **Allowing Construction and Urbanisation:**
 - Under [The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 \(AMASR Act\)](#), any kind of construction-related activity is not allowed around a protected site.
 - Once the monument is delisted, activities related to construction and urbanisation in the area can be carried out in a regular manner.
- **Loss of Legal Protection:**
 - The AMASR Act, 1958 provides legal protection to monuments declared to be of national importance.
 - Delisting a monument means it will **no longer have this legal protection and could be subject to neglect or damage**.

▪ Procedure for Delisting:

- **Section 35 of the AMASR Act allows** the Central Government to declare that any ancient monument or archaeological site of national importance has **ceased to be of national importance** through a notification in the Official Gazette.
 - A gazette notification was issued on 8th March 2024 for delisting the 18 monuments, followed by a two-month window for public objections or suggestions.

What does It Mean When the ASI Declares a Monument "Untraceable"?

- When the ASI declares a monument as "untraceable," it means that the monument is **no longer physically locatable or identifiable**.
 - Factors contributing to the loss of monuments include **urbanisation, encroachments, construction activities** like dams and reservoirs, and neglect over time.
 - Some monuments, especially **smaller or lesser-known ones, have deteriorated** to the extent that there is no surviving public memory of their existence.
- Despite the AMASR Act's mandate for the ASI to regularly inspect and conserve protected monuments, the effectiveness of these efforts has been inconsistent.
- Declaring monuments untraceable underscores the **loss of valuable cultural heritage** and highlights the need for better conservation efforts and resource allocation in the future.

What are the Challenges in Protecting India's Historical Monuments?

▪ Lost Monuments:

- The Ministry of Culture reported to the [Parliamentary Standing Committee](#) on Transport, Tourism and Culture that **50 out of India's 3,693 centrally protected monuments were missing**.
 - Few among the lost monuments were victims of rapid urbanisation, submerged due to reservoirs/dams, and remained untraceable.

▪ Inadequate Security:

- Only **248 out of over 3,600 protected monuments had security guards** posted.
 - The government could provide only 2,578 security personnel at 248 locations, falling short of the total requirement of 7,000 due to **budgetary constraints**.
 - The Parliamentary Committee expressed dismay over the insufficient personnel for monument protection, highlighting **budgetary limitations as a significant challenge**.
- A report by the [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#) of India revealed that at least **92 centrally protected monuments had gone missing**, highlighting the inadequacies in the monitoring and protection mechanisms.

▪ Lack of Comprehensive Survey:

- The **absence of a comprehensive physical survey of all monuments** after Independence has led to a lack of reliable information regarding the exact number of monuments under the protection of the ASI.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- The ASI, which works under the **Union Ministry of Culture**, is responsible for protecting and maintaining certain specific monuments and archaeological sites that have been declared to be of national importance under the relevant **provisions of The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904 and The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act)**.
- 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"**.

Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act)

- The aim of the act is to protect and preserve ancient monuments for future generations.

- Applies to **monuments over 100 years old in public or private ownership.**
- **Prohibits construction or alteration around ancient monuments** without National Monuments Authority (NMA) approval.
 - **NMA established in accordance with the AMASR Act** is responsible for the conservation and preservation of monuments and sites (and banned/restricted areas surrounding centrally designated monuments).
 - NMA is responsible for implementing the AMASR Act and granting permission for construction or developmental activity within protected and regulated areas.
- **Protected area is a 100-metre radius around the monument**, with a regulated area extending up to 200 metres beyond that.
 - Current restrictions prohibit construction within 100-metre radius of protected monuments and have strict regulations for permits in an additional 200-metre radius.

Read more: [ASI's Stance on Religious Practices at Monuments](#)

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the challenges in protecting India's historical monuments, to ensure the preservation of India's cultural heritage?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. With reference to Chausath Yogini Temple situated near Morena, consider the following statements:

1. It is a circular temple built during the reign of Kachchhapaghata Dynasty.
2. It is the only circular temple built in India.
3. It was meant to promote the Vaishnava cult in the region.
4. Its design has given rise to a popular belief that it was the inspiration behind the Indian Parliament building.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 4
- (d) 2, 3 and 4

Ans: C

Q. With reference to the art and archaeological history of India, which one among the following was made earliest? (2015)

- (a) Lingaraja Temple at Bhubaneswar
- (b) Rock-cut Elephant at Dhauli
- (c) Rock-cut Monuments at Mahabalipuram
- (d) Varaha Image at Udayagiri

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q.1 Safeguarding the Indian Art Heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. **(2018)**

Q.2 Indian Philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and their art in India. Discuss. **(2020)**

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