

Parliamentary Committee's Report on Protected Monuments

October 2, 2023 • vajiramandravi.com



What's in Today's Article?

- **Why in News?**
- **Background**
- **Can Monuments be Dropped from the Protected List?**
- **Other Major Recommendations of the Committee**
- **Way Forward**
- **Central Authorities Involved in Regulating Monuments**

Why in News?

- A Parliamentary Committee report tabled during the recent special session aims to prune the list of protected monuments in India.

Background:

- 359th report on functioning of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was prepared by the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism & Culture.
- The committee observed that many of the 3,691 **Centrally Protected Monuments** (CPMs) are “minor” monuments with no national significance.
- The committee recommended that the **list should be “rationalized and categorized” on the basis of the structure’s significance and architectural/ heritage value.**
- The list includes 75 graves of colonial-era soldiers or officials, which may not hold significant heritage value in the present time.
- A small brick wall enclosure containing graves of two British officials in Karnataka is a protected monument, the report pointed out.
 - Yet, they are getting the same level of protection as the Red Fort or the Taj Mahal.
- Hence, the committee suggests that the list of CPMs in India should be rationalized on the basis of their national significance.

Can Monuments be Dropped from the Protected List?

- List of Protected Monuments is regulated by the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, 1959 (AMASR Act)**.
- The Act protects monuments and sites that are more than 100 years old, including temples, cemeteries, inscriptions, tombs, forts, palaces, step-wells, rock-cut canes, and even objects like cannons and mile pillars that may be of historical significance.
- To remove certain monuments from the CPM list, AMASR Act has to be amended in the Parliament.

Other Major Recommendations of the Committee:

- **ASI’s Functioning:**
 - The committee has raised questions about the functioning of the ASI, in terms of its administration, security, restoration work and general upkeep of the sites.
 - The committee said that **till date, 531 monuments, about 14.4% of the total CPMs, have been encroached upon.**
 - However, encroachments from only nine monuments have been removed since 2015.
 - The committee recommended that the ASI should provide support to families affected in the process of encroachment removal and help them transition to alternative livelihoods.
 - It also advocated the use of advanced technologies such as LiDAR, ground-penetrating radar, and 3D scanning for enhanced accuracy and efficiency of excavations.
- **Bifurcation of ASI:**
 - The report advised bifurcation of the ASI on the basis of cerebral and managerial functions.

- The ASI can look after the core mandate – exploration, excavation and conservation aspects.
- On the other hand, the India Heritage Development Corporation (IHDC) can deal with the revenue aspect, such as ticket collection, auctions, etc.

- **Restrictions on Monuments:**

- Currently, under AMASR Act, there is a provision of a 100-metre prohibited area and 300-metre regulated area around all ASI protected monuments.
- It prohibits and regulates all activities like mining and construction around the stipulated area of all protected monuments.
- The committee found that this leads to public inconvenience.
- The report said that in some cases, an entire village is within a radius of 300 metres from a monument, which makes it difficult for residents to repair their houses.

Way Forward:

- The Central government is already working to amend the above-mentioned rules.
- In recent times, there have been instances where this rule came in the way of infrastructural projects and real-estate development, as it applies equally to significant and insignificant monuments.
- It is expected that the rules will be relaxed for smaller monuments like statues, cannons, etc. but retained for the **42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites** located across the country.

Central Authorities Involved in Regulating Monuments:

- **About National Monuments Authority (NMA):**

- National Monuments Authority is a **statutory body** set up under the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains AMASR (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010**.

- **Functions of NMA:**

- Make recommendations to the Central Government for grading and classifying protected monuments and protected areas declared as of national importance.
- Oversee the working of the Competent Authorities.
- To consider the impact of large-scale development projects, including public projects and projects essential to the public which may be proposed in the regulated areas and make recommendations in respect thereof to the competent authority.
- To make recommend actions to the competent authority for grant of permission.

- **Difference between NMA & ASI:**

- **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** is a statutory body, under the AMASR Act, 1958.
- ASI is **responsible for archaeological research and the conservation and preservation of cultural monuments in the country**.

- ASI is also responsible for conducting archaeological surveys, explorations and excavations in the country.
 - On the other hand, NMA's duty is to provide protection and preservation of monuments and sites.
 - It is not tasked with conducting surveys, explorations and excavations.
 - Applications for construction related work in the prohibited and regulated area are submitted to the NMA and not ASI.
 - NMA only regulates AMASR Act, 2010; on the other hand ASI regulates AMASR Act, 1958 as well as **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**.
-

Q1) When was ASI established?

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture, was established in the year 1861 is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

Q2) Who established the ASI?

ASI was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham who also became its first Director-General. The first systematic research into the subcontinent's history was conducted by the Asiatic Society, which was founded by the British Indologist Sir William Jones on 15 January 1784.

Source: [Rationalise centrally protected monuments, split ASI into two: Parliamentary panel](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/protected-monuments/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.