Conservation of Monuments in India

Why in News?

The approach of conservation of monuments in India requires a renewed relook.

How Monuments in India are conserved?

- **Monuments –** They are remains of our prestigious past, representing culture, art architecture and structural technology of bygone days.
- **Types -** Prehistoric sites, stone age rock-shelters, Neolithic sites, Megalithic burial sites, rock-cut caves, stupas, temples, churches, synagogues, mosques, tombs, palaces, forts, bathing ghats, tanks, water reservoirs, bridges, pillars, inscriptions, mounds, kos minars, excavated sites, etc.
- **Number of Monuments in India -** Central Government has declared ***3696 monuments and sites*** as of ***national importance*** under the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.**

  The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 provides provision for declaring a monument or sites as of national importance, provided it should fulfills the criterion specified.

- **State Monuments -** State Government and Union Territories have also declared the monuments/ sites as of State importance under their respective Acts.
- **ASI** - Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for protecting and maintaining these 3679 monuments and archaeological sites declared as of national importance.
- **Conservation Regulation** - An area up to the limit of ***100 meter*** from monument or site has been declared as ***prohibited area*** and an area up to the distance ***of 200 meter*** further beyond prohibited limit has been declared as ***regulated area***.

What is the Adopt a Heritage - program?

'Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan'

- **Adopt a Heritage Program** – It is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism, launched in 2017, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India.
- 66 monuments across India have come under the adoption scheme.
- **Feature** - Government invites entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms as well as individuals, to develop selected monuments and heritage and tourist sites across India.

- **Development** - Provision and maintaining of basic amenities, including drinking water, ease of access along with advanced amenities such as surveillance systems and tourism facilitation centres.
- **Monument Mitras -** Public sector companies and select private business houses that engage in the conservation of monuments.
- **Use of CSR -** There is no financial bid involved and the corporate sector is expected to use corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for the upkeep of the site.
- **Benefits -** Adopted landmark would be both scrupulously maintained and appropriately highlighted for tourism
- **Adopt a Heritage 2.0** - ASI launched the programme on in 2023 to foster collaboration with corporate stakeholders to preserve monuments.

What are the issues in managing heritages in India?

- **Isolation of Monuments** – Not absorbing the monuments in to townscape and the daily lives and part of residents.
- **Non Usage** – Not opening the monuments to public and keeping them closed deteriorates the structures of the building.
- **Inconsiderate Usage** – Use of monuments to private functions, such as conferences and fashion shows and using it without the concern for conservation.
- **Reuse issue** – Use of monuments as office or institutional buildings.
    - Converting Kerala's Padmanabhapuram Palace into a dental collage, or Delhi's Red Fort into a film city.
- **Rigid Preservation** – Monuments are kept highly inaccessible to public and it creates a sense of otherness.
- **Threat of polarisation -** Religious polarisation of cultural and heritage sites and spreading hatred among the public towards the monuments.
- **Lack of Interest -** Inadequate concern by the trusts and big corporations.

What can be done?

- Change the perspective and relationship of cities with the monuments.
- Bring together the frame of history and contemporary life in ways that make them easily compatible.
- Utilization of monuments in productive manner and make it more accessible to the public.
- Renovation with fresh landscape and Constructive upgradation of monuments with modern art without damaging the structure.

> *The Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor project in Varanasi is aimed at transforming pilgrims' experience of the temple town.*

- Careful consideration of local requirements and national ideals to create policy on reuse.

Reference

The Hindu | Adopt a Heritage Programme

