



Leasing Out Heritage Monuments

What is the issue?

\n\n

- \n
- The Red Fort has been leased out to the Dalmia Bharat Group recently.
\n
- This has lead to widespread criticism due to concerns in heritage conservation.
\n

\n\n

What is the Tourism Ministry's scheme?

\n\n

- \n
- The tourism ministry last year launched the '**Adopt a Heritage**' scheme.
\n
- **Objective** - This was an attempt to increase public-private partnership in conservation and maintenance of heritage sites.
\n
- It invited private and public sector companies to become 'Monument Mitras'.
\n
- **Services** - The '**friends of monuments**' will adopt heritage sites.
\n
- The CSR arms of the Monument Mitras will fund the maintenance and upkeep work.
\n
- They will develop basic and advanced amenities at the monuments.
\n
- **Privileges** - The Monument Mitras will be given "visibility" on the monument premises.
\n
- They will as well get visibility in the tourism ministry's Incredible India website.
\n

- **Selection** - Monument Mitras have been selected through “Vision Bidding”.
\
- It is the process where agency with the best vision for the heritage site gets selected.
\

\
\

What are the checks in place?

\
\

- \
 - The five-year contract can be terminated if the company does not comply with the ASI guidelines.
\
 - The legal status of the monument will not change after adoption.
\
 - The company will not collect any money from the public unless allowed by the government.
\
 - Also, profits, if any, will be used to maintain and upgrade tourism facilities.
\
 - An Oversight and Vision Committee will keep a watch.
\
 - It is co-chaired by the secretaries of Tourism and Culture, and with the D-G, ASI, as member.
\
 - Projects will be evaluated based on:
\

\
\

- \
 - i. increase in tourist footfall
\
 - ii. improvement in overall tourism sector perception
\
 - iii. increase in employment generation
\

\
\

What are the notable adoptions?

\
\

- \
 - Government-owned NBCC has adopted Purana Qila.

- \n
- SBI Foundation, the CSR arm of state-owned SBI, has adopted the capital's Jantar Mantar.
- \n
- Yatra.com has Hampi, Qutub Minar, and Ajanta and Ellora caves.
- \n
- GMR and ITC have submitted proposals for the Taj Mahal.
- \n
- In all, 93 Archaeological Survey of India-ticketed monuments are open for bidding.
- \n
- 30 companies have been selected to "adopt" some of these sites.
- \n

\n\n

What is the recent deal?

\n\n

- \n
- As per the MoU, the Dalmia Group will spend Rs 25 crore over the next 5 years.
- \n
- It will be on the light and sound show, turnstile gates, app-based multi-lingual audio guide, free Wi-Fi.
- \n
- Besides, a cafeteria and construction of ramps for differently-abled visitors (Tactile Paths) would also be taken up.
- \n
- The Group will get the privilege of placing their name on signage inside the fort.
- \n

\n\n

What is the significance of Red Fort?

\n\n

- \n
- In old times, taking control of the fort was considered a symbolic control of the country.
- \n
- Thus, for long, the fort has been synonymous with the regime that ruled India.
- \n
- The Red Fort is seen as a symbol of the country's freedom struggle.

- \n
- The 1857 War of Independence was led by Bahadur Shah Zafar from the Red Fort.
- \n
- That is why every prime minister has addressed the nation from its ramparts every August 15.
- \n
- It is also a world heritage site, one of the three in Delhi.
- \n
- The other two being Humayun's Tomb and Qutab Minar.
- \n

\n\n

What are the concerns with leasing out?

\n\n

- \n
- Handing over a symbol of the freedom struggle to a corporate entity has raised concerns.
- \n
- Allowing corporates to become managers of heritage sites raises doubts on credibility in heritage conservation.
- \n
- Corporates will have only limited “access” to core areas.
- \n
- Also, there will be “no handing over of monuments”.
- \n
- Nevertheless, at the sites where there is no ASI involved, the external parties may be allowed to touch the building as well.
- \n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

- \n
- ASI has to be cautious in this regard.
- \n
- It must monitor the process and progress of the maintenance and upkeep work.
- \n
- India needs a uniform policy about heritage and heritage conservation.
- \n
- Experts in the field of conservation, senior historians and archaeologists

should be involved in formulating a scheme.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express, Economic Times

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative