Standing Committee Report Summary
Development and Conservation of Museums and Archaeological sites – Challenges and Opportunities

- The Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism, and Culture (Chair: Mr. T.G. Venkatesh) submitted its report on the subject 'Development and Conservation of Museums and Archaeological sites - Challenges and Opportunities' on July 26, 2021. Key observations and recommendations include:

- **Conservation and preservation:** The Committee noted that the present state of museums is not adequate. It recommended museums to adopt global best practices for conservation where possible. It recommended the Ministry of Culture to establish a model process for preservation of artefacts and maintenance of archival records. Apart from ensuring consistency, this would help in benchmarking the work of contractors. The Committee also recommended museums to frame their individual Museum Policy, and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to release a Conservation and Management Plan for all centrally protected sites.

- **Use of technology:** The Committee recommended the use of specific technology to improve maintenance of museums and sites. These include: (i) use of virtual reality in galleries, (ii) central database of digitised artefacts and sites, and (iii) blockchain technology to catalogue artefacts and sites. The Committee also recommended using QR code to link to webpages with online maps, a detailed history of artefacts, and facts about a museum for an interactive experience.

- **Staff and training:** The Committee observed that museums are often understaffed, with vacancies in ASI reaching 29%. While noting that the upcoming Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation may train more museum staff, it recommended the Ministry of Culture to increase budgetary allocation towards training of museum staff. Further, to encourage school students to pursue careers in the field, it suggested: (i) arranging an annual visit to museums, (ii) introducing a course on museology for high school students, and (iii) including information on local monuments in school curriculum.

- **Funding:** The Committee encouraged funding of museums and sites through donations, corporate social responsibility, and sponsorships. To increase revenue, it recommended: (i) instituting pay-as-you-wish tickets, where visitors can pay money in

addition to a minimum ticket price, (ii) enabling contributions to maintain a specific artefact or 'adopt a heritage' scheme for sites, and (iii) tours beyond public hours at higher prices. Public-private models for to manage museums and sites may be piloted.

- **Security:** To ensure safety and security across museums and archaeological sites, the Committee recommended measures including: (i) installing security systems and surveillance cameras, (ii) patrolling by armed personnel, and (iv) undertaking a physical security audit for sites maintained by the ASI. It also recommended implementing a disaster management plan in every museum and ASI site.

- **State operated sites and museums:** The Committee recommended museums operated by the central government and the ASI to share their expertise with state owned museums and local Departments, respectively. The Committee noted that state museums have inadequate grants, most of which are concentrated towards museums in a few states. It recommended increasing total grants and encouraging equitable distribution among states.

- **Footfall:** To increase the publicity and footfall at museums, the Committee recommended: (i) using hyper-local marketing and social media to promote museum displays, (ii) collaborating with other museums for exchange and loan of artefacts through a pre-planned rotation schedule, (iii) engaging local communities and craftsmen around archaeological sites to build a connect with local communities, (iv) developing facilities including restrooms, gardens, and souvenir shops around sites to increase tourism prospects, and (iv) lowering the fees for filming at sites and museums.

- **Encroachment:** To tackle encroachment, the Committee recommended: (i) constructing boundary walls to demarcate site limits, (ii) empowering estate officers to tackle encroachment of archaeological sites, and (iii) enlisting the help of local communities to protect the monument.

- **Urbanisation:** The Committee took note of rapid urbanisation around sites and recommended enacting solutions for decreasing the impact of pollution (especially air pollution) around monuments, and mandating Heritage Impact Assessments for large development projects.

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