

Adopt a Heritage Scheme [Latest News]

The 'Adopt a Heritage Scheme' is a unique venture of the Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) which envisages developing heritage sites, tourist sites and monuments across the length and breadth of the country in order to make them tourist-friendly so that the tourism potential and the cultural importance could be enhanced in a phased and planned manner.

Adopt a Heritage Scheme Latest News

In Feb 2023, the government announced that it will hand over around 1,000 monuments to the private sector for their upkeep under the control of the [Archaeological Survey of India](#).

Key details:

- The Indian government has launched a revamped version of the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme.
- It aimed at encouraging private companies, public sector units, and other firms to adopt and maintain State-owned archaeological sites and monuments. The businesses that enter such agreements will be known as "Monument Mitras."
- The government aims to adopt 500 protected sites by August 15, 2023, and another 500 sites shortly thereafter, which would be a tenfold increase in the number of sites brought under the ambit of the original 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme launched in 2017.

What is Adopt a Heritage Scheme?

- The President of India launched the Adopt a Heritage Scheme on World Tourism Day i.e., 27th September 2017. Official link - <https://www.adoptaheritage.in/>
- The scheme will allow private and public sector corporations to adopt most of India's top heritage sites and improve tourism in such sites.
- It is clarified that 'The Adopt a Heritage' is essentially a non-revenue generating project. The agency will be selected on the basis of the unique concept of vision bid and no financial bid is involved in the scheme.
- The response to the project has been very encouraging as the agencies who have come forward for adoption includes not only public and private industry/individuals but also schools and law firms.
- These agencies are referred to as Monument Mitras.
- The companies will be responsible for building, operating and maintaining tourism infrastructure at 105 monuments and natural heritage sites up for adoption.
- The Ministry of Tourism has the power of termination of MoU of Monument Mitras in case of noncompliance of guidelines and expression of interest (EoI), or any other reason of non-performance.

List of 10 Monuments adopted by companies under the Adopt a Heritage scheme:

1. Red Fort
2. Gandikota Fort
3. Area surrounding Gangotri Temple and Trail to Gaumukh
4. Mt. Stok Kangri Trek in Ladakh
5. Jantar Mantar
6. Suraj Kund
7. Qutub Minar
8. Ajanta Caves
9. Leh Palace
10. Hazara Rama Temple in Hampi

Action Plan of Monument Mitras:

The project would primarily focus on maintenance and development of world-class amenities and tourist infrastructure including basic civic amenities and advanced amenities like secure environment, ease of access, public conveniences, cleanliness, illumination and night viewing facilities for an all-inclusive tourist experience which would result in an increase in the footfall from both foreign and domestic tourists.

Advantages of Adopt a Heritage Scheme

- Corporate control of some monuments and heritage sites ensure that their maintenance and operations could be handled more professionally.
- An agency with the best vision for the heritage site will be given an opportunity to associate pride with their CSR activities.
- The company would also get limited visibility on the premises and the Incredible India website.

Adopt a Heritage Scheme Issues

The 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme allows businesses to use their Corporate Social Responsibility funds to construct and maintain various visitor services at select sites. While some activities appear to be aimed at improving visitor amenities, there are several concerns.

- The 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme risks diminishing the role of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which has been mandated to safeguard archaeological sites and preserve them for future generations.
- It also abandons the Sarnath Initiative, guidelines devised by the ASI, the Getty Trust, U.S., the British Museum, and National Culture Fund to safely keep excavated objects and present them to visitors in an engaging manner.

- It also risks historical revisionism by giving businesses, instead of trained professionals, a chance to build museums and interpretation centres and develop their content.
- The scheme's mandate also overlooks the fact that many monuments selected for the scheme already have tourist infrastructure, which begs the question of what is driving the need for new ticket offices and gift shops. For instance, monuments selected for the scheme — such as the [stupas at Sanchi](#), the Brihadeshwar temple in Thanjavur, and Akbar's palace city at Fatehpur Sikri — already have tourist infrastructure.
- Allowing businesses to occupy prime public land and build their own brands could further diminish the grounds around iconic monuments, which have hitherto been prohibited from new construction to facilitate excavations that may lead to the discovery of antiquities that offer clues to the historical context of monuments.
- Another danger of the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme is that it may undermine local communities and their relationships with historical sites. Guided tours led by employees of large businesses who have permission to adopt a monument may endanger the livelihoods of those who have lived near the site and made a living by regaling visitors with stories of its colourful past.
- Additionally, the potential of big businesses to underwrite a monument's illumination is troubling, as it could lead to night tourism and pull electricity away from rural homesteads and hospitals.
- The Uttar Pradesh government's decision to convert unadopted monuments into hotels (like Chunar Fort, a citadel overlooking Barwasagar Lake, and several residences built by Awadh's Nawabs) confirms that the scheme is continuing to place reckless tourism and corporate interests over historical preservation.

The way forward:

- Rather than adopting monuments and historical sites, businesses could support citizens' understanding of why monuments matter.
- This can be done by earmarking CSR funds for grants for researching, writing, and publishing high-quality textbooks, and developing imaginative and effective ways of teaching history.
- Corporates can also follow the lead taken by philanthropists and give funding to organisations such as the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune to continue their missions of writing history by rationally coordinating the textual record and the archaeological evidence.
- Industrial houses can support the meaningful conservation of heritage buildings by using their CSR funds to purchase equipment that releases fewer noxious gases that darken and corrode marble buildings and discharge fewer effluents into rivers, thus making these water bodies less likely to serve as pollution sinks.
- They can also support organizations that train individuals in restoration skills, such as the DRONAH Foundation and the Centre for Advancement of Traditional Building Technology and Skills. These organizations are working to protect monuments from the impact of climate change, including water percolation, salination, and peeling of murals.

- Furthermore, corporates can give a new lease of life to humanities and social sciences departments by instituting fellowships, endowing professorships, and supporting research training programmes.
- Finally, private sector resources and expertise can be used to secure monuments from various threats, including mining projects, defacement, and looting.

Thus, by embracing these forward-thinking principles of historical preservation, businesses can showcase India's progress in this field and inspire more citizens to participate in safeguarding the nation's heritage.

UPSC Questions related to Adopt a Heritage Scheme

What is the Oversight and Vision Committee of the Adopt a Heritage Scheme?

- The corporates that are bidding for adopting will do a meticulous analysis of the site in order to come up with a vision development plan for each and every heritage site or a monument that they are interested in.
- Monument Mitras (private and public sector companies and individuals) shall have to prepare a resilient vision for each and every monument under the project.
- The Oversight and Vision Committee will then go through these analyses and evaluate them based on the parameters defined by the committee.

What are the facilities that will be provided under the Adopt a Heritage Scheme?

- The Archaeological Survey of India undertakes activities like providing basic amenities and facilities to the people who visit the monuments or sites that are centrally protected.
- These amenities include vehicle parking, pathways, toilet units, drinking water dispensers and facilities for the physically handicapped.
- Monuments that are identified as “Adarsh Smarak” will get facilities like cafeterias, modern toilets, interpretation centre, Wi-Fi, braille signage, etc. depending upon the requirement and feasibility.

Frequently Asked Questions on Adopt Heritage Scheme

Q 1. Why was Adopt a Heritage Scheme launched?

Ans. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India launched the “Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan” project to develop tourism amenities at heritage/ natural/ tourist sites spread across India for making them tourist-friendly.

Q 3. What are the objectives of Adopt a Heritage Scheme?

Ans. The objectives of Adopt a Heritage Project are as follows:

- Development of Tourism Infrastructure
- Development of Tourist Amenities at Heritage Sites and Monuments
- Promote Cultural and Heritage value of India
- Promote Maintainance of Infrastructure
- Increase employment and support livelihood at tourist sites

