



Adopt a Heritage: Project for Development of Tourist Friendly Destinations

 drishtiias.com/printpdf/adopt-a-heritage-project-for-development-of-tourist-friendly-destinations

'Adopt a Heritage' Scheme was called a "sell-out" when the Red Fort was adopted by Dalmia Bharat which committed 25 crore Rupees for it as per the MoU. The government explained that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed for 'Red Fort' is 'only' for the development, operations and maintenance of tourism amenities in and around the monument. It envisages limited 'access' of non-core areas and 'no handing over of monument' is involved.

What is 'Adopt a Heritage' Scheme?

- It is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and State/UTs governments.
- The Project aims to develop synergy among all partners to effectively promote 'responsible tourism'.
- It was launched on 27 September 2017 (World Tourism Day) by the President of India.
- It aims to involve public sector companies, private sector companies, and corporate citizens/individuals to take up the responsibility for making our heritage and tourism more sustainable. It is to be done through the development, operation and maintenance of world-class tourist infrastructure and amenities at ASI/ State heritage sites and other important tourist sites in India.
- Agencies/Companies would become '**Monument Mitras**' through the innovative concept of 'Vision Bidding', where the agency with the best vision for the heritage site will be given an opportunity to associate pride with their CSR activities.
- The project primarily **focuses on providing basic amenities** that includes cleanliness, public conveniences, drinking water, ease of access for differently abled and senior citizens, standardized signage, illumination and advanced amenities such as surveillance system, night viewing facilities, and an enhanced tourism experience that will result in more tourist footfalls, both domestic and foreign.

Rationale Behind 'Adopt a Heritage'

-
- The heritage sites are facing common challenges primarily related to the operations and maintenance of the various infrastructural as well as service assets.
 - There is a need to develop a robust mechanism for the provision of basic amenities on an immediate basis and advanced amenities on a long term basis.
 - The government needs more resources for maintenance of heritage. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protects 3,686 ancient monuments and archaeological sites, including 36 world heritage sites. So far, 31 agencies or Monument Mitras have been approved to adopt 95 monuments/tourist sites and 4 MoUs have been signed. The Government intends to expand the scheme.

Objectives: Priority Areas of the Programme

- Developing basic tourism infrastructure
- Inclusive tourist experience for heritage site/monument or tourist site
- Promoting cultural and heritage value of the country to generate livelihoods
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness in a sustainable manner through world class infrastructure at the site
- Creating employment through the active involvement of local communities
- Harnessing tourism potential for its effects in employment generation and economic development
- Developing sustainable tourism infrastructure and ensuring proper operations and maintenance

Approach: What is the Vision Bidding?

- The heritage sites/monuments are categorized as **green, blue and orange** on the basis of tourist footfall and visibility. For example, Red Fort and Taj Mahal are green monuments while Kotla Firoz Shah (Delhi) is orange.
- The Monument Mitras are supposed to present a vision for the development of all necessary/mandatory basic amenities and advanced amenities for each of the heritage site that they take up as a package (combination of Green-Blue-Orange) enlisted and any other heritage sites, monuments and tourist site.
- The most competitive and innovative vision is considered as the successful bidding entity.
- Bids are primarily evaluated on the basis of capacity of bidders, their success stories in delivering similar projects, value addition to the selected heritage sites. This concept of innovative bidding is defined as 'Vision Bidding'.

Previous attempts for Corporate Involvement in Heritage Management

- The government in 2011 formed a National Culture Fund. Since then, 34 projects have been completed under it through public-private partnerships.
- Another similar scheme under the UPA government was 'Campaign Clean India,' in which the government had identified 120 monuments/destinations. Under this scheme, the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) had adopted Qutab Minar as a pilot project in 2012, while ONGC adopted six monuments — Ellora Caves, Elephanta Caves, Golkonda Fort, Mamallapuram, Red Fort, and Taj Mahal — as part of its CSR.

Experience of Italy

Italy has the largest number of UNESCO Heritage Sites in the world. The cash-strapped government has been successfully collaborating with corporates since 2014 for heritage maintenance after shunning them for decades.

Conclusion

- The scheme is essentially a non-revenue generating project and the public outcry is unfounded.
- It is part of responsible tourism where the 'Monument Mitra' essentially spends his CSR funds for upkeep and maintenance etc., and gets limited visibility.
- It is a rational move for sustainable development of cultural and natural heritage of India.