



ASI Response on Sambhal Mosque

Why in News?

Recently, the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has requested the civil court in Sambhal for control and management of the **Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal**, citing its status as a [protected heritage site](#). The request follows the court's approval of a survey of the mosque.

Key Points

▪ Controversy Around the Sambhal Mosque:

- On 19th January, 2018, an [First Information Report \(FIR\)](#) was filed against the mosque's management committee for installing steel railings on the mosque's steps without obtaining proper authorization.
- The ASI stated that the **Shahi Jama Masjid which was notified as a protected monument in 1920**, under the **Ancient Monuments Preservation Act 1904**, falls under its jurisdiction.
- The ASI argued that the mosque's management committee made unauthorised structural modifications, which are unlawful and should be restricted.

▪ Access and Regulation:

- The ASI maintained that public access to the mosque is permissible, but only if it adheres to ASI regulations.
- The ASI has sought full control and management of the mosque, emphasizing its responsibility for maintaining the monument and regulating any changes to its structure.

▪ Violence During Court-Ordered Survey:

- [Violence](#) erupted in Sambhal on 24th November 2024, during a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid.
- Four people were killed, and several others sustained injuries during the clashes.

▪ Judicial Commission:

- A three-member judicial commission was formed on 28th November 2024, to investigate the violence.
- The commission will determine whether the violence was spontaneous or part of a premeditated conspiracy.
- The inquiry will analyze the events leading to the violence and recommend measures to prevent such incidents in the future.
- It is required to submit its findings within two months, with any extension subject to government approval.

▪ Survey and Temple Petition:

- The court-ordered survey was linked to a petition claiming that the **Jama Masjid** in Sambhal **was originally a Hari Har temple** located in mohalla Kot Purvi and was converted into a mosque in 1529.
- **Historical Context:**
 - The Jama Masjid in Sambhal is one of three mosques **constructed during Babur's reign (1526-1530)**. The others include the mosque at Panipat and the now-demolished Babri Masjid.
 - **Historian Howard Crane** described the mosque's architectural features in his work, *The Patronage of Babur and the Origins of Mughal Architecture*.
 - Crane noted a **Persian inscription stating that Babur ordered the mosque's**

construction in December 1526 through his subedar, Jahangir Quli Khan.

Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904

▪ About:

- The Act was passed in 1904, during the tenure of **Lord Curzon in British India**.
- It **aimed at preserving ancient monuments** and objects of historical, archaeological, and artistic significance.

▪ Key Provisions:

- It empowered the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to protect and restore ancient Indian monuments.
- Regulated the movement and trade of [antiquities](#) to **prevent illegal trafficking**.
- Provided for control over archaeological excavations in specified areas.
- Facilitated the acquisition of ancient monuments for preservation in certain cases.

▪ Significance:

- Played a foundational role in protecting India's historical and cultural heritage under a structured legal framework.
- Enhanced the responsibilities of the ASI in monument conservation.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/asi-response-on-sambhal-mosque>

