

Chief Secretary review Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) conservation efforts and heritage preservation initiatives in Ladakh

Leh, February 12, 2026: The Chief Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Shri Ashish Kundra, today chaired a review meeting to assess the status of conservation and restoration of ancient monuments, historic buildings, and heritage structures across the region. The meeting focused on the role of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and inter-departmental coordination for safeguarding Ladakh's rich cultural legacy.

A comprehensive presentation was delivered by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Mini Circle Leh, highlighting its ongoing activities, achievements, and future action plans.

The presentation detailed the list of Centrally Protected Monuments under ASI in Ladakh, including prominent heritage sites such as Leh Palace, Shey Palace, Hemis Monastery, Thiksey Monastery, Alchi Monastery, Lamayuru Monastery, Likir Monastery, Phyang Monastery, Rangdum Monastery, Mulbekh Rock-Cut Sculpture, and several other significant monuments located in Leh and Kargil districts.

The ASI informed the chair about conservation works undertaken during FY 2022–23 through FY 2025–26. These included structural conservation, water-tightening of roofs, restoration of pathways, strengthening of monastery walls, upgradation of pradakshina paths, and preservation of heritage assets at key monuments such as Rangdum Monastery, Wanla Monastery, Tseru Stupa, Phyang Monastery, and the Old Castle Leh. Details regarding funds allocated, released, and utilized over the past four financial years were also shared, reflecting effective implementation of conservation and heritage upgradation works.

Special emphasis was placed on Leh Palace (Ancient Palace Leh), designated as an Adarsh Smarak and the only ticketed monument under ASI in Leh. Visitor footfall statistics and revenue generation data for recent financial years indicated steady public engagement and growing tourism interest.

During the review, the Chief Secretary sought detailed inputs on restoration processes, conservation methodologies, and ASI's technical role in heritage preservation. He directed that a joint meeting be convened with the Gonpa Association and the Tourism Department to strengthen collaborative restoration efforts.

Emphasizing heritage interpretation and awareness, the Chief Secretary instructed that informative historical display boards be installed at all major heritage sites to enable tourists to better understand their historical and cultural significance. He also stressed the urgent need for systematic documentation and protection of Ladakh's petroglyph and rock art, particularly those associated with the prehistoric Silk Route. He proposed the development of a Petroglyph Park for display and interpretation, ensuring in-situ protection of classic and prehistoric pieces without disturbing their authenticity.

The Chief Secretary underlined the importance of listing heritage sites with historical significance, exploring possibilities for World Heritage recognition, and organizing a "Trans-Himalayan Winter Conclave" involving scholars and experts to deliberate on preservation strategies.

He also called for fast-tracking the inventory and documentation of petroglyph, holding stakeholder consultations on old town heritage and caves, and ensuring economic incentives linked to heritage conservation. The need for Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with ASI, capacity-building workshops, and awareness programmes on conservation practices was emphasized to strengthen institutional support.

Shri Janhwij Sharma, Additional Director General (Conservation, World Heritage & NCF), ASI, shared insights into archaeological opportunities in Ladakh and proposed practical measures for preserving monasteries and heritage structures through coordinated and sustainable approaches.

The meeting was attended by Shri Sanjit Rodrigues, Secretary, Tourism & Culture; Shri Janhwij Sharma, Additional Director General (Conservation, World Heritage & NCF), ASI; Shri Sunder Paul, Director (Conservation), ASI; Dr. Sonam Spalzin, ASI; Shri Piyush, Superintendent Archaeologist; Shri Tsering Phaldan, Director Tourism; Shri Abdul Mutalib, Chief Engineer, Public Works Department; and other senior officials.



