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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**Protecting India's Built
Heritage and Ancient Buildings**

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PROTECTING INDIA'S BUILT HERITAGE AND ANCIENT BUILDINGS

In News

- The Madras High Court has directed the Tamil Nadu government to constitute the commission that would act as an advisory body on the preservation of heritage structures in the State.

About

- The Madras High Court's recent intervention to enforce the Tamil Nadu Heritage Commission Act of 2012 (amended in 2017) has brought to the fore the need to make comprehensive heritage management a ground reality.

About Heritage and Ancient Buildings

- India is an ancient civilisation and one of the richest nations in terms of cultural heritage—or those **physical artifacts and intangible legacies**.
- India's built heritage is an amalgamation of the **country's multi-millennial interactions** with different cultures—is managed by governmental agencies at the national, state and local levels.
 - ◆ These bodies have their respective mandates in protecting and preserving the country's **ancient monuments and other structures** of historical value
- India **boasts of myriad beautiful historic buildings** ranging from ancient South Indian temples and Rajputana forts to some fine monuments built by Mughals.
- These incredible iconic buildings in India are a treat for history lovers and noted for their impressive architecture and rich historical background.

Challenges

- India's built heritage is under constant threat from the various natural disasters that visit the country every year.
 - ◆ Earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis threaten serious damage to monuments and other historical structures.
- In India built heritage is **under-funded by either public or private sources**.
 - ◆ Neither are banks and financial institutions keen in extending loans for the protection and development of heritage assets.
- Challenges are emerging in balancing the rapid urbanisation and heritage preservation.
- Even those structures considered to be of national/state or local importance in India and protected as such remain under **threat from urban pressures, neglect, vandalism and, worse, demolition**.

Laws and Regulations

- India's built heritage are well-protected by **Article 49 of the Constitution**:
 - ◆ "It shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, (declared by or under law made by Parliament) to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be."
 - ◆ Further, **Article 51 A (f) states**: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture"
- The country's earliest heritage laws were the **Bengal Regulation XIX of 1810** and the **Madras Regulation VII of 1817**.
- In 1863 Act XX was passed, empowering the government to conserve structures of historical or architectural value.
- In 1951, the **Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Declaration of National Importance)** Act replaced the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904 and later was supplanted by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958.

- India's commitment to heritage was further emphasised when it became a signatory to UNESCO's World Heritage Convention for the protection of global and national heritage.
- A number of state heritage laws have also been enacted in independent India.
- At the central level, nationally protected monuments fall under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
 - ♦ It functions under the Ministry of Culture and is responsible for archaeological research and conservation and preservation of monuments categorised as "national heritage".

Suggestions

- The protection of India's heritage is covered by various laws, there is much scope for improvement in terms of heritage conservation.
- In view of the significance of heritage in a nation's life, it is critical to have a strategy in place that deals specifically with what needs to be done to preserve heritage.
- The imperative is to integrate the rehabilitation of the heritage structure in Disaster Management (DM) at the national and local levels.
- It is also important to undertake adequate documentation of heritage structures.
 - ♦ Such documentation should include the determination of potential risks to heritage structures based on their location and other characteristics.
- There is a need for **innovative mechanisms** to fund both, heritage protection and post-disaster rehabilitation.
- To be meaningful, conservation works need to be coupled with urban improvements, improved transport infrastructure, providing economic opportunities, and improving health, education and sanitation infrastructure.
- India's Heritage is underfinanced, and a Comprehensive Vision for Heritage Budget and Planning with innovative means of financing is essential.
 - ♦ This heritage does not just constitute the important markers of India's past but also presents a unique opportunity for generating employment and incomes through heritage tourism and local development

Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss the current challenges for heritage management in India and provide a future roadmap for conserving the built heritage and antiquities

