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ASI preserves Hajo temple pillars

Gaurav Das | TNN

Guwahati: For the first time, the Guwahati circle of the ASI carried out conservation work using a combination of natural adhesive made from organic materials and steel belts to preserve two damaged pillars inside the mandap of the famed 16th century Hayagriva Madhava temple at Hajo town.

Earthquakes have resulted in hairline fractures, rusting of iron dowels, and erosion of major portions of the pillars. To address the problem, conservationists, engineers, masons and other experts decided to use natural and organic materials like lime water, molasses and fenugreek (meethi) seeds to make natural adhesive in place of cement to fill the cavities inside the pillars along with steel belts to help consolidate their positions.

TOI

One of the pillars fitted with steel belt at Hayagriva Madhava temple

"We have been trying to conserve two pillars for over three years. Two expert committee meetings were also held. But due to non-availability of masons, work couldn't be taken up. The pillars were in bad shape. A portion of one of the pillars was broken into three parts," said Milan Kumar Chauley, superintending archaeologist.

The second pillar that had developed hairline cracks was provided a circular steel belt and missing portions were filled up with mortar made of epoxy resin and stone dust. The belt will prevent further expansion and widening of the cracks.

Initially, it was decided that broken stones should be consolidated by bolting and filling up the void with stone dust and epoxy resin. But masons from Odisha didn't turn up. Then, it was decided that bolting may cause vibration hampering the structure.

"We had used organic materials before at other monuments. But this is for the first time that steel belts and organic materials have been used to preserve a monument. The organic materials were used to fill up the cavities. When the pillars were constructed, cement was not invented. The epoxy resin combination was used to fill up the hair line cracks and fractures," said Abhijit Deka, senior conservation assistant of ASI's Guwahati circle.