

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.96
ANSWERED ON. 21.07.2025

**KEEZHADI EXCAVATION REPORT BY TAMIL NADU ARCHAEOLOGY
DEPARTMENT/ASI**

96. Dr. T Sumathy *Alias* Thamizhachi Thangapandian:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Keezhadi excavation report prepared by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)/ Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department under Amarnath Ramakrishna was officially reviewed by the Government after submission in June 2025;
- (b) if so, the details of the specific deficiencies cited by the Government or ASI leading to rejection, with dates and expert opinions;
- (c) the rationale behind repeated transfer of the lead archaeologist within nine months and its impact on excavation continuity; and
- (d) whether the Government is likely to commit to restoring excavation autonomy, release the full Keezhadi report and set up a joint expert panel including Tamil Nadu Government appointees in line with protecting Tamil heritage and Dravidian pride?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
(SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT)

- (a) & (b) Excavations conducted by Archaeologists of ASI are done over a period of time during which more than one Archaeologist may have led the excavations. The lead Archaeologist submits a report of the excavation, which is vetted by the experts at ASI. After duly verifying and incorporating the conclusions of experts in concurrence with the lead excavation Archaeologist, ASI releases an official report. Keezhadi excavation has been conducted under the aegis of ASI and a report of lead Archaeologist is under review. The comments of experts have been shared with the lead Archaeologist, which are still to be finalized.

Excerpts of observations of experts are given at Annexure. There is no practice of rejecting a report as explained in the aforementioned paragraph. Excavations at important sites are done by ASI as well as State Archaeology Departments and academic institutions. Currently, the Keezhadi excavation is being conducted by the State Archaeology Department of Tamil Nadu.

(c) Allocation of works to archaeological officers is a routine administrative matter.

(d) The excavations in the country are conducted as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958, and the Rules of 1959. ASI is fully committed to follow the law and due scientific process for releasing the accurate findings based on the excavation at Keezhadi. Views of eminent experts will be taken and incorporated for scientifically authentic record.

**ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (A) AND (B) OF LOK SABHA
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As per experts suggestion:

- (a) the nomenclatures of the three periods require change.
- (b) the time bracket of 8th century BC to 5th century BCE given for Period 1 is not justified at all.
- (c) The Other two periods should also be determined on the basis of scientific AMS dates and the material recovered in view of stratigraphical details. For the earliest period in the present state of our knowledge we can, at the maximum, suggest than it originates somewhere in pre-300 BCE.
- (d) for the available scientific dates only depth from where the sample has been collected may not be enough but the layers should also be marked for comparative consistency analysis.

Details missing

- The village map must be redrawn
- Content/map
- Plate
- Drawing
- Plan
- Contour
- Cuttings (A plan/map giving location of the trenches)
- Cultural Period to be reoriented as specified
- Stratigraphy
- Drawing
- Image-Graffiti
