

# **The Buddha's Journey from Peshawar to Zurich: Handling the Complex Challenges of Coordination**

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## **Introduction**

International collaboration in the fields of contemporary cultures and cultural heritage helps propagate and preserve national history, memory and identity. While taking many forms and shapes, such collaborations provide both challenge as well as opportunities to appraise capacities of cultural organizations. Thus, such international collaboration demands unconventional leadership that is able to unravel complexities of processes for establishing coordination among various stakeholders. The protagonist of this case study, Mahmood, served as the focal person in this international project between Pakistan and Switzerland in his capacity as the Director General of the Department of Archeology and Museums (DOAM). He was responsible for dealing with policy, rules and regulations relating to the loaning of cultural artifacts. The whole episode entailed and exhibited leadership that was able to maintain a steady flow of coordination and communication between important stakeholders i.e. DOAM, Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (DAM), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Swiss Development & Cooperation Agency (SDC), Islamabad, and Rietberg Museum Zurich (RMZ), Switzerland.

This study narrates the exclusive event of the journey of a huge Buddha statue from Peshawar Museum to RMZ Switzerland for an international exhibition during 2018-19. The exhibition was initiated and coordinated by DOAM under its national charter. The challenges of the project were multifaceted and for the ease of analysis, these have been divided into two sections i.e. the particular issues related to DOAM and its counterpart organization in KP and the project specific issues.

After the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, the archeological sites and museums were devolved to provinces. However, international cooperation remained with the federation. In this case, a multicultural team added to the complex working environment in this project. Members from three different countries – Pakistan, Switzerland and Germany – were undertaking this monumental task. The role of leadership was of paramount importance at every stage. Hence, a focused approach was required for impactful outcomes. This study documents major challenges faced during the execution of this project and necessary leadership skills applied for the successful resolution of the issues that arose and were dealt with during the project. Although it was a one-off exclusive event, it provided an excellent opportunity to understand structural and functional gaps existing vis-à-vis inter-organizational

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coordination (IOC) in DOAM and its counterpart organizations in the provinces. The insights and lessons learnt during the course of the on-ground activities can easily serve as guidelines for similar projects in the future. This study provides a cumulative blueprint of the skills, strategies, procedures and decisions followed at each step to address issues arising from time to time. This would help to build a strong case to rectify existing discrepancies in order to improve the business environment in DOAM and its counterpart provincial organizations. Some practical policy recommendations are also presented at the end with a view to improve the performance of DOAM and these other organizations.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Moving a colossal, 2,000-year-old Buddha statue from Peshawar Museum to RMZ entailed dealing with a number of policies and administrative and operational challenges. Lack of capacity in DOAM, non-existent coordination mechanism with provinces, and non-enunciation of SOPs for the movement of such artifacts required innovative thinking, relentless perseverance with stakeholders and the ability to take risky initiatives and decisions. Resolution of these complex governance issues was a possible only on account of personal efforts rather than institutional accomplishments.

## **Key Research Questions**

The study examines:

- (i) How effective coordination was forged among all the partners for completing this challenging task?
- (ii) What leadership skills were necessary for handling conflicts arising in the multicultural setting of this project?

## **Research Methodology**

This is an explanatory study with a qualitative scheme of research. The relevant data has been gathered from the primary sources like direct observation of the author, interviews with the participants, etc. Two separate questionnaires were also developed, one to record the opinions of the staff members and the other for the management group involved in the project (**Annex I**). The secondary sources include literature review and data gathered from the printed materials and documents available in the records of DOAM and DAM-KP. Besides the process of data collection, a detailed discussion was also carried out with experts in archaeology, management and public administration.

## Section 1

The impact of cultural heritage and archeological history is not limited to the historical sites and museums only. Indeed, culture is a reflection of national identity. Nations preserve and exhibit their cultural heritage for identity, pride and posterity. Pakistan is acclaimed worldwide for its rich cultural heritage and centuries old archeological artifacts. It was in the northern region of Pakistan that Buddhism flourished during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and prevailed for the next 1,000 years.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of stupas and sculptures of Buddha were found in the areas of Taxila, Swat and Takht-i-Bahi near Mardan (World Heritage Site). Today, the Gandhara sculptures occupy a prominent place in museums across Europe, USA, Japan, China, Korea and India. Museums in Pakistan preserve precious collection of Buddha sculptures; Peshawar Museum has one of the richest treasures of Gandhara art in stone, stucco, terracotta and bronze.

### 1.1 DOAM – A Department Dealing with its Own Devils

DOAM is the continuation of the Archaeological Survey of India, which was created in 1861 for archaeological survey, research, excavations, protection, preservation and conservation of the moveable and immovable antiquities of British India. Till 2011, it served as the only agency for, *inter alia*, promotion of the cultural heritage of Pakistan both within the country and abroad. DOAM still remains the state party under UNESCO Conventions for protection of cultural heritage and undertaking international collaboration. With customs being a federal subject, DOAM is the leading federal agency allowing export of antiquities for the purpose of exhibition, research and restoration under Antiquities Act, 1975.

The department has always been fortunate enough to have a visionary leadership that was keen in taking initiatives on both national and international level. Till 2011, DOAM had organized about fifty international exhibitions in collaboration with foreign museums. It was also successful in registering six archaeological sites on UNESCO World Heritage List and participated in research with a number of foreign archaeological missions. The ill-planned devolution of the department, however, led to a decline in old achievements and successes. International cooperation was reduced significantly. From 2011 to 2017, DOAM could only coordinate three international events and, that too, on a small scale. Similarly, no significant activities were undertaken by the department in the fields of archeology, research, exploration, etc. As a result, a submissive department, operating under an inadequate leadership and shattered inter-organizational coordination network, lost its fervour for innovation and high achievement.

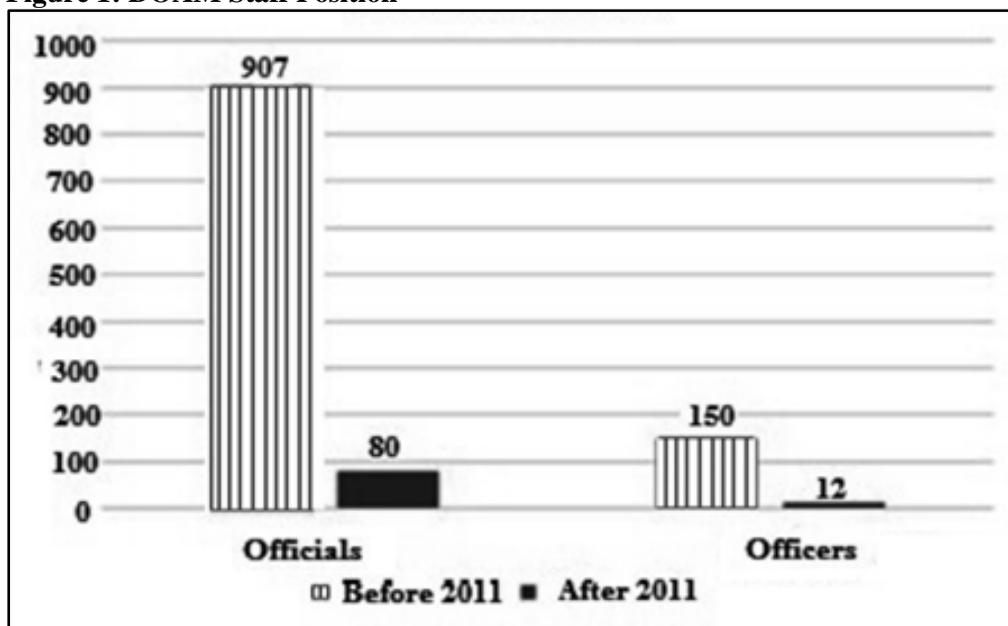
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<sup>2</sup> Luca M. Olivieri and L. Colliva, "IsMEO/IsIAO – DOAM Excavations at Bīr-Koṭ-Ghwaṇḍai 1984-1992. 'a Reassessment of the Chronological Sequence on the Basis of the Latest Fieldwork at the Site' in Pakistan," *Pakistan Archaeology*, 1995, no. 32 (2017).

## 1.2 The Ill-Effects of Devolution

Prior to devolution, DOAM had regional offices in the provincial capitals: Archaeological Exploration & Excavation Branch, Karachi; Pakistan Institute of Archaeological Training and Research (PIATR), Lahore; Central Archaeological Library, Karachi; Central Archaeological Laboratory, Lahore; and museums, archaeological sites and historical monuments located across the country. The sanctioned strength of the department was about 1057 employees; this figure was reduced to a paltry 100 after 2011.

**Figure 1: DOAM Staff Position**



The mandate of DOAM was also confined to Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and administration of the Islamabad Museum. Devolution of offices and officials to provinces had subverted the organizational structure and functions to an extent that had shaken the whole edifice. The ill-thought and unjust division of assets and human resource developed immense mistrust and communication gap between DOAM and its provincial counterpart. This further hindered the career prospects for DOAM employees which in turn rendered them alienated, demoralized and non-committed towards their duties. In fact, the whole organization had fallen victim to stagnation.

As a result of DOAM's breakup in the post-devolution period, an ongoing confusion ensued among UN agencies and donors. This state of affairs had alarmingly hampered international collaboration in the field of archaeology and museums. On the other hand, the provincial governments could not fully adopt archeology and museums as provincial subjects and failed miserably to put in place an appropriate legal and

institutional framework. This, in turn, led to a fracturing of the governance mechanism related to archaeology and museums.

In 2015, Muhammad Arif, the regular Director General (DG) of DOAM, retired. After him, the department continued working under a stopgap arrangement. Mahmood, the Joint Secretary in the National Heritage & Culture Division, was given the additional charge of DG DOAM in February 2017 and he carried out this duty for over two years till August 2019. He also had the experience of working in international environments and had worked closely with UN agencies, donors and INGOs during his previous assignments.

## **Section 2**

### **The Scene Setter**

It was early one morning in October 2017 when Mahmood, the DG DOAM, and Johnnes, Deputy Director of RMZ, were sitting across the stretch of a wide wooden table in the department's conference room, accompanied by Sophie, Development Officer, SDC, and Azmat Khan, Director DOAM. It was their second meeting when John expressed his foremost concern, *“Do you think it is possible that we can bring the Buddha for an exhibition in Zurich?”*

The question was simple but the answer was very difficult. There was a deep, meaningful silence in the room as Mahmood took a pause to weigh his options and looked towards Azmat, and then replied in a resolute voice, *“The task is indeed challenging, but we will certainly make it happen – for the pride of this department, this country and surely to secure a far-reaching collaboration and friendship between these two countries.”*

Even at that time, Mahmood was fully aware of the impediments involved in an international joint venture such as this since DOAM had not undertaken any such project after its devolution in 2011. The task was multifaceted as there were issues regarding both policy and capacity about which he was equally apprised of. After John and Sophie left, Mahmood looked at Azmat, a grey-haired seasoned officer in his mid-50s, who responded firmly, *“Sir, we will make this event possible for the pride of our country and for the revival of prestige and credibility of our department.”* For Mahmood, the support and backup of his team was heart-warming and he could now set eyes on the successful completion of this project.

## **Section 3**

### **The Story**

The ancient land of Gandhara, located across modern-day Afghanistan and north-western Pakistan, is known for its Indo-Greek art works. It is considered as one of the main centers of proliferation of Buddhism in Asia. The Buddha statue, taken to Zurich for exhibition, was excavated by a British archaeological team in 1909 in Sahr-i-Bahlol, Mardan region. It was then handed over to the Peshawar Museum where it remained for over a hundred years until it was transported to RMZ in December 2018.

### **3.1 The Initiative**

The DG, ever since assuming the charge of this department, had always looked for re-establishing international collaboration which was one of the important functions of DOAM. In April 2017, he met Sophie at a cultural event in Islamabad and discussed the possibility of establishing cooperation in the field of archaeology and museum activities. Sophie, already inspired by the rich cultural heritage of Pakistan, promised to connect DOAM with some cultural organizations in Switzerland.

The SDC, an organization under Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, had been operating in Pakistan since 1966. The agency had worked with the federal and provincial governments over an impressive range of areas pertaining to education, health, governance, humanitarian assistance, etc. Though, remarkable in their own right, these accomplishments lacked a summation – a final flourish of the Pak-Swiss partnership, which was to be accomplished by this joint effort in the cultural realm.

Having worked in Pakistan since 2015, Sophie was acquainted with the functioning and capacity of public sector organizations. In a subsequent meeting, she shared her concern regarding the immensity of a Pak-Swiss joint venture with Mahmood, *“Do you believe in your ability to satisfy the pre-requisites for an inter-country collaboration on art and culture?”*

The DG was well acquainted with the lengthy processes and coordination issues involved in handling international projects with constrained time lines. He also had knowledge of fast-track working of organizations like SDC, where the public services are liable to uphold their credibility and the trust of their citizens by all means. The finances in such international projects are usually borne by the other party. The DG's confidence reassured Sophie, thereby encouraging her to arrange for a meeting between the DG and Mr. John, head of the RMZ – a major Swiss art museum administered by the city of Zurich. Like most European organizations, RMZ dwelled little on the processes and followed a rather outcome-oriented approach. Specializing in the traditional and contemporary arts of Asia, Africa, America and Oceania, the RMZ enjoyed a distinct status as the only Swiss art museum treasuring non-European art and artifacts. The museum hosts a remarkable collection of about 23,000 objects for public

display in its galleries. The RMZ undertakes a commendable effort to showcase the Buddhist lifestyle through joint exhibitions and remains committed to enhancing its credibility regarding this subject matter. The RMZ had, however, not undertaken any project with Pakistan in the past.

### **3.2 Visit of John to Peshawar**

October 2017 was at the precipice. John along with Dr. Caroline Widmer, Curator of Paintings at the RMZ, arrived in Pakistan on the invitation of DOAM. During their visit to Peshawar Museum, the curator introduced a statue of Buddha in *abhaya mudra* (reassurance pose) to the guests, *“This 9-foot high and 1.5-ton heavy, Gandhara-period colossal Buddha statue was created between the first and third century BCE.”* The robe-wearing Buddha is one of the largest pieces of that period in the Gandharan art and almost perfectly intact since its installation at the site of display. At that time, the Peshawar Museum was under renovation and many objects were covered with cloth and dust. Laying their eyes upon it, John and Dr. Widmer basked in the mystique. John expressed his first gaze at the statue as *“love at first sight”*. The enticement was so compelling that in the meeting the next morning he asked the DG, *“Do you think it is possible that we can bring the Buddha for an exhibition in Zurich?”*

## **Section 4**

### **4.1 The Initial Arrangements**

The next day, the DG with his two senior-most colleagues in DOAM, started to chalk out the roadmap for this challenging task. Mahmood said, *“Our first task is to make a coordinated effort to take all the concerned departments on board and obtain approval from the Federal Cabinet; the complexity of the project would certainly raise some eyebrows. We are dealing with a myriad of attitudes here.”*

During the same week, the DG discussed the proposal with the Federal Secretary, National Heritage & Culture Division (erstwhile National History and Literary Heritage Division) and found him very sincere and forthcoming. The Secretary agreed to the proposal, in principle, but asked the DG to take the Federal Minister on board before initiating the summary for the Cabinet. Subsequently, a briefing was arranged for the Federal Minister which was also attended by Sophie and other officials of the division. John joined the meeting via Skype. During the briefing, the DG sought support of the Minister for getting approval from the Federal Cabinet and then the Provincial Cabinet of KP. After gleaning necessary input from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs Division and Law Division, a comprehensive case was submitted to Federal Cabinet for signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between DOAM and RMZ. The Federal Cabinet endorsed the proposal to the sheer joy of the DG and his team.

Subsequently, permission of the Provincial Cabinet of KP for loaning the Buddha statue to RMZ was required as a much-needed development. This part of the project required a negotiator with powers to convince persons at the political level and settle matters at the highest provincial management level. The DG then travelled to Peshawar along with Azmat. During his journey, the DG remained slightly anxious about the response of the officials in KP, but he was confident as he had strong and convincing arguments for participating in this international venture. Extensive discussions and briefings with the Secretary of Department of Tourism, Sports, Archaeology and Museums, KP and Director of DAM KP were held as no procedure or precedent existed for approval of loaning and transporting the priceless Buddha statue. An added layer of difficulty was the fact that the government at the center and in KP province belonged to two different political parties. Hence convincing officials of the KP government was not easy. However, despite all these hurdles, the DG, with the support of the Federal Minister and the Secretary, was able to convince the provincial officials about the benefits of this project. The Provincial Cabinet finally accorded its approval to sign the letter of agreement (LoA) for lending the large Buddha statue to RMZ.

## **4.2 Signing of MOU and LOA**

In March 2018, during a ceremony held in Zurich, DOAM and RMZ signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). At the same ceremony, an LoA was also signed between the DAM KP and RMZ (**Annex II**). This was a significant development towards execution of the project.

## **4.3 The Exhibition in Zurich; the Social and Cultural Outreach**

It was the cold evening of December 12, 2018, when Mahmood was standing on a marble platform in RMZ, proudly viewing the Buddha statue right in the middle of the museum hall that was packed with visitors. These art lovers had thronged the museum just to have a glimpse of the sacred Buddha from Pakistan. He was exhilarated as the Secretary, Department of Archaeology and Museums, KP whispered, "*The exhibition is indeed a success and will be remembered for a long period of time.*"

The main event, "Next Stop, Nirvana" exhibition, was held from December 12, 2018, to March 31, 2019, and attracted about 35,000 visitors and monks from across Europe who came to gaze at the rare effigy.<sup>3</sup> RMZ had advertised the exhibition widely and had also launched an international coverage of the event. The news of Buddha's journey to Zurich was also reported in leading print and electronic media in Pakistan, hailing the efforts of DOAM and Peshawar Museum in bringing home the honor of international representation of cultural heritage of Pakistan (**Annex III**).

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<sup>3</sup> Johannes Beltz, "Next Stop, Nirvana? Measuring the Success, Impact, and Sustainability of a Buddhist Art Exhibition," *Orientations* 52, no. 4 (July/August 2021).

The exhibition took the cultural heritage of Pakistan to an entirely different level. Buddhism is the new way of life in Europe, not as a religion, but as a code of practical life. Their reverence to Buddha and Buddhism stands second to none. The exhibition featured a whole theme on Buddhism with innumerable articles gathered from around the world along with RMZ's own precious collections that spoke volumes on the origin and stature of Buddha himself, his biography, teachings, and history of the religion. The statue, with its archeological and historical uniqueness, was the main attraction of the event and a matter of pride for Pakistan.

#### **4.4 Fruits of Exhibition; Museum Cooperation**

The exhibition proved a milestone in establishing long-term collaboration between Pakistan and Switzerland in the field of culture and also opened avenues for similar cooperation with other countries. RMZ organized an exhibition of contemporary miniature paintings by students of National College of Arts Lahore (NCA) in Zurich from March to June 2019. Tobias Hotz, the stone conservator from Germany, led a two-day workshop for museum officials on "Stone Object Preservation, Conservation and Restoration" in April 2019 in Islamabad. John also proposed holding a joint exhibition on the "Indus Valley Civilization" in coordination with Karachi and Lahore museums but this proposal could not progress beyond the initial stages. He also offered lending some artifacts from RMZ for exhibition in Pakistan.

In 2019, for the first time, DOAM sent twenty artifacts from its own collection to China for exhibition at National Museum of China, Beijing. Similarly, cooperation was established with Republic of Korea in the field of research whereas France also requested the Fasting Buddha from Lahore Museum to be loaned for an exhibition in Guimet Museum, Paris. It also offered technical assistance in the field of museology. The Australian High Commission in Islamabad offered DOAM cooperation in the field of cultural heritage and in 2019. Professor Mark Allon from University of Sydney, travelled to Pakistan to discuss cooperation on establishing a conservation and research center at Islamabad Museum for study of Gandharan Buddhist manuscripts. In 2018 and 2019, UNESCO and SDC approved a joint venture with DOAM on two projects on the digitization of antiquities and capacity building of museum officials in developing computerized inventory of the objects.

The safe return of Buddha from Zurich to Peshawar was termed as a 'symbol of trust' between the two countries. At the organizational level, the event restored the communication channel and coordination between DOAM and its counterpart provincial/regional organizations. The success of this project brought DOAM in the limelight and restored, to some extent, its past glory and credibility. The fruits were even more far-reaching as DOAM was able to establish a reputation among art lovers.

## **Section 5**

### **Complexities of the Project**

The DG, while heading the project, confronted a number of complex issues and on one occasion expressed to Azmat, *“I felt myself in an administrative quagmire.”* There was a long list of approvals and requirements to be met before transporting the statue to Zurich. The process demanded extensive efforts and coordination with various ministries and departments under a strict time line. A few issues are highlighted briefly hereunder:

#### **5.1 The Demoralized Staff**

At the time of joining DOAM, things looked bleak to Mahmood. The employees were demoralized as a result of the devolution. They were in a state when all were bemoaning the past and wailing about the present state of affairs. Not much was happening around, but as leaders know challenges are windows to new opportunities. The DG, with extensive experience and knowledge of public sector management, had an idea to deal with such a complicated situation. He had the vision to put life back into the dwindling department.

#### **5.2 Extensive Documentation**

The first hurdle was the extensive documentation. Despite signing an MoU in 2018, it took eight months to move the statue. For instance, the Customs Department asked for many documents regarding the loaned item, the second party, i.e. RMZ, the lending terms, security of artifact, conservation report of the object, etc. The conservation report of the centuries old statue could not be dusted out from the shelves of the Peshawar Museum and the DAM KP had to prepare it on emergency basis to get clearance of the consignment. Similarly, the airline disclosed at the last moment the condition of keeping consignment in their warehouse for cooling purpose for 48 hours before its transportation. This resulted in delay of the transportation of the statue which was being anxiously awaited in Zurich. Since the process had not been documented ever before, the project team had to face new challenges every day.

#### **5.3 Deinstallation of the Statue**

The next difficulty was the absence of a stone conservator in DAM KP who could uninstall the priceless object from a pedestal where its feet were fixed in two-feet deep concrete. Thus, after long deliberations, SDC arranged the services of Tobias Hotz, a stone conservator from Germany. His visit to Peshawar was arranged by DOAM and it proved to be a good experience, as Hotz recalled, *“We tried to move it with a crane but it wouldn't budge and I had to stop the operation before the statue was damaged.”* However, he was not surprised that the statue was attached with steel rods in the pillar

to keep it safe and secure from frequent jolts by tremors and earthquakes. The team was forced to break a part of the museum wall to find out where the statue was attached. Although it was eventually detached, the newly laid floor of the museum was damaged during the process.

#### **5.4 Transportation of the Huge Statue**

The Buddha was transported by Emirates airline to Zurich via Dubai and it arrived in the nick of time for the “Next Stop, Nirvana” exhibition at the RMZ. The cost of transportation and insurance was borne by SDC and RMZ jointly as per the LoA. This required hectic negotiations and consultation for safe travel of the statue within the agreed terms and conditions.

#### **5.5 Information Gap and Personal Interests**

A few issues were raised due to lack of information sharing, either deliberately or accidentally by the people involved, promoting individual benefits over collective gains. For instance, the artifact needed to reach the site of exhibition ten days prior to the event in order to be cleaned and readied before the public display, but it arrived just two days before the exhibition. This caused inconvenience for the RMZ, although they were able to manage it. Moreover, the curator of Peshawar Museum, at one time, felt that he might not be able to fly to Switzerland for exhibition due to some administrative issue, so he tried to pull-out his support and assistance from the entire process.

#### **5.6 Claim by Pakistan Insurance Company Ltd (PICL)**

Just two days before the departure of the statue, Azmat came in perplexed while holding an official letter containing a new claim by the Pakistan Insurance Company Limited (PICL). The company claimed that every cultural artifact leaving the country needs to be insured through them, otherwise, it could not travel out of Pakistan. The claim was not true and the issue was finally settled.

#### **5.7 The Challenges of a Multi-Cultural Team**

The team on ground comprised members from Pakistan, Switzerland and Germany. The team members had different backgrounds and perceptions of working norms and environment. The core team included Mahmood, Sophie, John, Secretary Department of Sports, Archaeology, Museums Culture & Sports KP, and the Director and Curator of Peshawar Museum. Due to his long association and experience, Professor Muhammad Ashraf, head of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad was consulted regularly during execution of the project. In addition, the team on ground for uninstallation of the statue included Azmat; Director and Curator of Peshawar Museum; program officer SDC; representative of M/s Movers (shipping company); Tobias Hotz, and the representative of RMZ. John joined the team at the time of departure of the Buddha. Here, it is important to mention that apart from

cultural diversity, both the teams operated virtually also. While operating in a virtual mode, a number of issues arose, including time difference, working norms and environments, etc. cropped up. The DG was able to get everyone on-board and deal with each member according to varying maturity levels. Some members were driven by enticement of rewards or fears of punishment, others operated by delegating powers and responsibilities and still a few were prodded only through close monitoring and the use of authority.

## **Section 6**

### **Analysis**

An international project such as this was a risky commitment for the DG who had assumed the charge not long ago. There was no prior mapping available relating to IOC between DOAM and its provincial counterparts in recent years. Furthermore, managing a multi-cultural team amidst a challenging environment was an added complexity. Accordingly, each step taken towards executing the project required careful planning from the start. Fortunately, once the process had begun, the pieces of the puzzle started to fall into place.

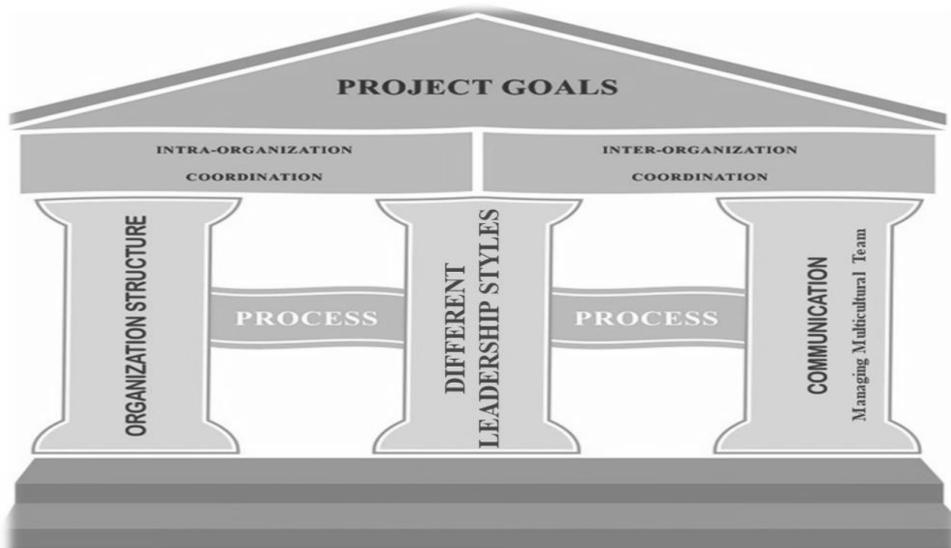
Coordination is the most important prerequisite to achieve any organizational goal and it is impacted by many organizational factors. Malone and Crowston's model is based on a concept of coordination as management of dependency between actions.<sup>4</sup> In case of specific events, it requires an in-depth identification of the nature of the environment in which an organization has to operate and the subsequent development of appropriate procedures in relation to each case. In this connection, IOC refers to the act of managing interdependencies between activities performed to achieve a common goal.<sup>5</sup> This much-needed IOC is generally achieved through common coordination mechanisms such as IO communication, knowledge sharing, rules and procedures, routines, liaison, integration roles, interim authorities, etc.

The following figure describes the role of organizational structure, leadership and the importance of communication in establishing effective coordination required to achieve the project goals.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas W. Malone and Kevin Crowston, "What Is Coordination Theory and How Can It Help Design Cooperative Work Systems?" *Proceedings of the 1990 ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work - CSCW '90*, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 2: Theoretical Framework**

## 6.1 Organizational Structure

Organizational structure can be understood when organizing people and tasks into specific units to enhance communication, allocate required resources and facilitate actions in order to reach decisions regarding organizational goals.<sup>6</sup> DOAM was a well-structured organization prior to 2011, having four main features of bureaucratic structure<sup>7</sup> but an ill-planned division resulted in conflicts, confusion, lack of coordination among functions, failure in ability to share ideas and a compliant mechanism of decision-making. Henry Mintzberg divided the structure of an organization into five different arrangements and one of these is *adhocracy* with different independent functioning project teams possessing horizontal job specialization.<sup>8</sup> It is divided into operating adhocracy that functions on behalf of the clients of the organization, and administrative adhocracy that serves the organization itself. In flatter organizations, many people are under the control of one supervisor with a few hierarchical levels where employees have more individual responsibility.<sup>9</sup> The employees are experts and cannot be told how to work; the job of managers is just to synchronize and manage their work.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wendy Bloisi, Curtis W Cook, and Phillip L Hunsaker, *Management and Organisational Behaviour*, Open World Cat, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead (UK): McGraw-Hill Education, (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Senior and Stephen Swailes, *Organizational Change*, 4th ed. (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Henry Mintzberg, "Structure in 5'S: A Synthesis of the Research on Organization Design," *Management Science* 26, no. 3 (1980): 322–41.

<sup>9</sup> E.Edwine Ghiseli and J. P. Siegel, "Leadership and Managerial Success in Tall and Flat Organization Structure," (25), no. 4 (1972): 617–24.

<sup>10</sup> Peter F. Drucker, "The Coming of the New Organization," *Harvard Business Review*, 1988, 45–53.

The lack of coordination between DOAM and its counterpart organizations in provinces called for an unconventional approach and tactics by the DG in the discourse to this project. From the start, Mahmood had constituted a project team comprising the most experienced officials of DOAM. An office order was issued to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all team members and Azmat was nominated as the focal person for this project. The core members of the team were provided laptops and a WhatsApp group was created for prompt communication and decision making.

In IOC, an organizational structure occupies a significant mantle; but the use of network-type arrangements is gaining popularity. Network arrangements are helpful in information sharing, expediting processes and making recommendations etc.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, IOC gains grounds especially through the network of serving civil servants who work together and know each other well enough to be able to coordinate outside of official channels.<sup>12</sup> The DG made an active headway through his existing network of peers and counterparts at federal and provincial levels.

He was also able to establish IOC through the hierarchical authority, originating directly from the center of government, where the Federal Minister and the Federal Secretary, occupying the central positions, were goal-driven and had no vested interests in any particular department and could therefore enforce coordination as a rule. John also explicitly remarked that “*without the large network resulting from this coordination, the project would not have been possible.*”

## **6.2 Leadership and Management of a Multi-Cultural Team**

During his interaction with DOAM officials, Mahmood had mentioned his desire to turn DOAM into an efficient and high performing organization. He encouraged the officers to revive the success stories DOAM projects from the past. While handling this project, in addition to the challenges of coordination, the DG had another onerous task of leading a culturally diverse team. According to Northouse,<sup>13</sup> leadership is “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” Communicating vision to different integrated units of organization is also a leadership task that can set the growth path of the organization.<sup>14</sup>

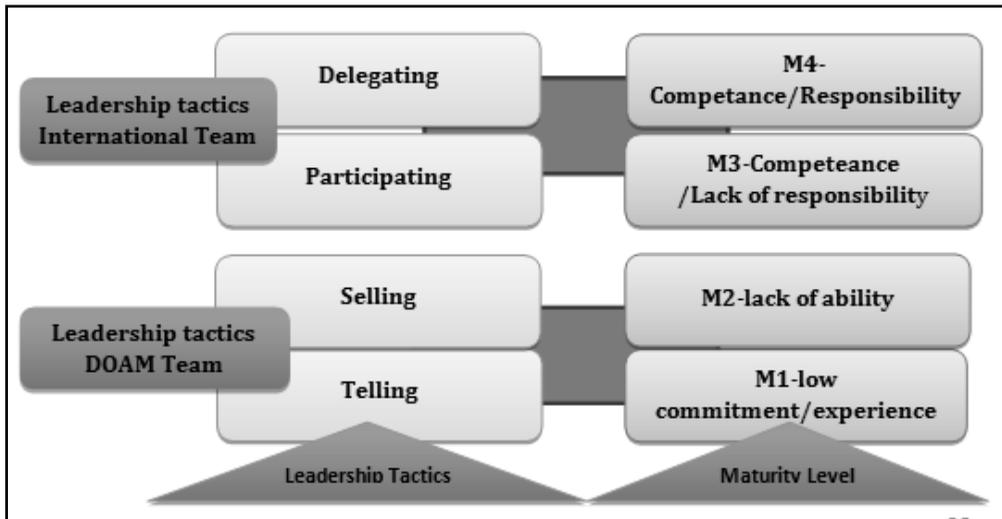
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<sup>11</sup> Per Lægveid et al., *Coordination Challenges and Administrative Reform*, In book: *Public administration Reforms in Europe*, vol. The View from the Chapter: 22 (Edward Elgar, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> B. Guy Peters, “The Challenge of Policy Coordination,” *Policy Design and Practice* 1, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 1–11.

<sup>13</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice, 6th Edition*, Amazon (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Ihsan Ali and Muhammad Naeem Qazi, *Gandharan Sculptures in the Peshawar Museum in the Peshawar Museum in the Peshawar Museum (Life Story of Buddha)* (KP: Directorate of Archaeology), accessed September 9, 2021.

**Figure 3: The Situational Model of Leadership**

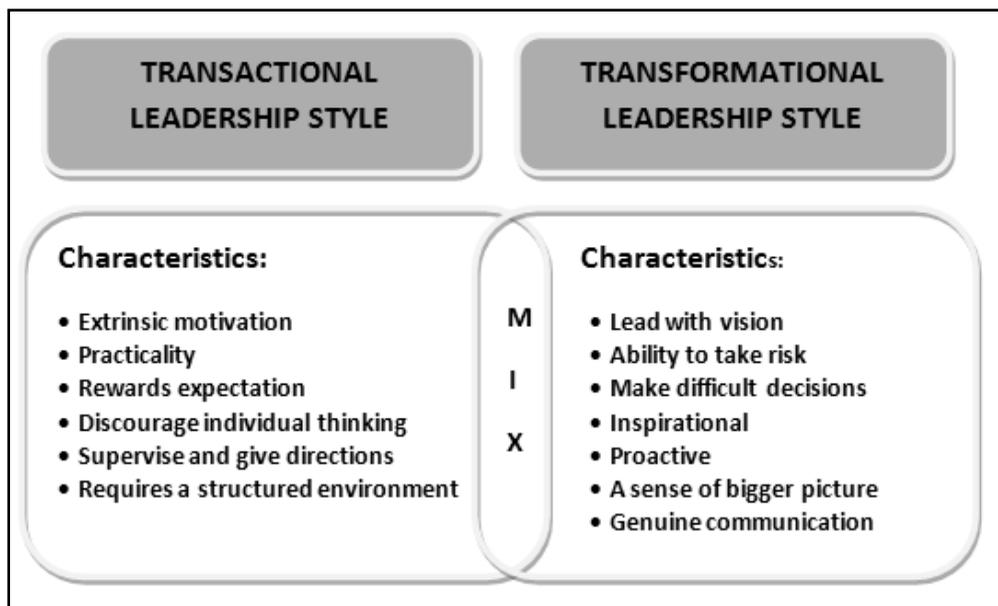
The leadership skills exhibited by Mahmood may be analyzed in the context of Hersey and Blanchard's situational model of leadership (1982). The situational model of leadership favors multiple leadership styles and tactics, as and when required by the situation. The main tactics include telling, selling, participating and delegating. The first two tactics are for less mature (Level M1/M2) team members with low commitment and experience and who need constant direction and motivation to deliver. The latter two styles are for more seasoned members (Level M3/M4) who are well-versed in their job and can take basic work-specialized decisions on their own.

The DG was able to steer the multicultural and diverse team with multiple tactics. For example, through his regular contact and follow-up with the project team at DOAM, he was able to motivate and convince them through the telling and selling style. He assured them that the successful completion of this project would help in reviving the glory and trust of DOAM and bring more of such projects. The DG also agreed, in principle, to grant honorarium to the project team and make all possible efforts to send them for foreign trainings in future. Tobias Hotz, being a world-renowned stone conservationist and competent at his work, needed no directions and was rather dealt with an approach of 'participation' and 'delegation'. He took most of his decisions himself while dismantling the statue in consultation with Azmat and the Curator Peshawar Museum.

The transactional and transformational leadership styles inspire others through vision, charisma, emotional attachment and personal relationships<sup>15</sup> and work well in such situations. The salient characteristics of the two styles are given in the following figure:

<sup>15</sup> Kwasi. Dartey-Baah, "Resilient Leadership: a Transformational-Transactional Leadership Mix," *Journal of Global Responsibility* 6, no. 1 (April 2015): 99-112.

**Figure 4: Leadership Style. Source: Kwasi Dartey-Baah, 2015**



Looking at the practice and literature, it may be argued that the DG used a mix of both these leadership styles while handling this project. For instance, bearing the confidence of the Federal Secretary of the division, the DG negotiated terms and conditions of the MoU and LoA with SDC and RMZ in the best interest of the country, which were later on approved by the federal and provincial cabinets. It was agreed upon that all the expenses of insurance and transportation of the statue from Peshawar to Zurich and back will be borne by RMZ and the museum's compensation fee was not included in the agreement so as to build trust for future collaboration and avoid any conflicts. No additional incentives or concessions were demanded relating to the travel of officials from Pakistan to Zurich at the time of the exhibition. These were difficult and risky decisions which were taken in the best interest of DOAM and the country.

In another instance, when the PICL had sent a letter to stop the process of transportation of the statue (on the account that it was the sole authority to be hired for insurance on export of every state property), this issue was promptly addressed and the matter was sorted out immediately. Any delay at that time could have jeopardized the whole project. The DG had no time to consult the division while replying to PICL and himself took a prompt decision as per rules.

Transformational leaders march ahead by keeping each individual in the loop. Multi-cultural teams frequently face the challenges of direct and indirect communication, individual attitudes towards hierarchy, accents, fluency and norms of decision-making. The cultural differences in these perspectives, if left unresolved, can seriously impede

working and coordination in these diverse teams.<sup>16</sup> The uninstallation team was culturally diverse and had been facing various issues on daily basis in Peshawar. It was necessary to keep the team motivated and avoid any further conflicts. The constrained time schedule was one of the major sources of conflict. Since John was leading the project virtually from Switzerland, his manner of interaction with the Pakistani staff on WhatsApp and Skype was at times arrogant and non-accommodating. His tone and words were sometimes harsh. At this difficult time, the DG played a pivotal role to dilute any tense situation that would arise to avoid conflict and friction between the team members. He counted on emotional intelligence to uplift the spirit of DOAM and kept the communication channel open with John and Sophie and the rest of the foreign team members of the project. John, in his feedback, has mentioned that the project could only have been completed due to the close cooperation of DOAM and SDC.

The team members were asked to assess the performance of the leader through a questionnaire based on seven dimensions of team coordination, namely purpose and goal, roles, team processes (communication, cohesion), intergroup relationships, problem solving, passion, commitment and leadership attributes (**Annex IV**). Nearly ninety percent of the members were satisfied with their leader and the outcome of the project and mentioned that they had received clear instructions about the purpose and goal of the project, that roles were defined at the start, and intra and inter organizational cohesion and communication was intact all the time. They also expressed a positive stance on the rest of the dimensions. This shows that the leadership of the project was able to stand up fairly to their expectations and it delivered in the end.

### **6.3 Communication in a Challenging Environment**

The significance of communication is evident in its power to alter the outcomes of complex projects; in most cases this either amplifies the fruits of coordinating endeavors or sabotages the process. Communication is integral for employees' motivation, dissipating information, shaping desired attitudes, socialization, controlling process, conflict management and problem solving. Being the third pillar in this framework of analysis, communication had radical impact on the outcomes of coordination activities in this venture. An effective and efficient communication system requires leadership acumen such that the members trust the leader and keep an active communication open.<sup>17</sup> The uninstallation phase of the project required active communication as each day brought a fresh challenge for the DG. John, in his feedback, has highlighted communication as a major challenge in this project.

Right from the beginning of this project, the DG remained engaged in active communication through email, WhatsApp, Skype, etc. with SDC and RMZ. At a later stage, he asked Azmat to keep regular contact with DAM KP and other team members

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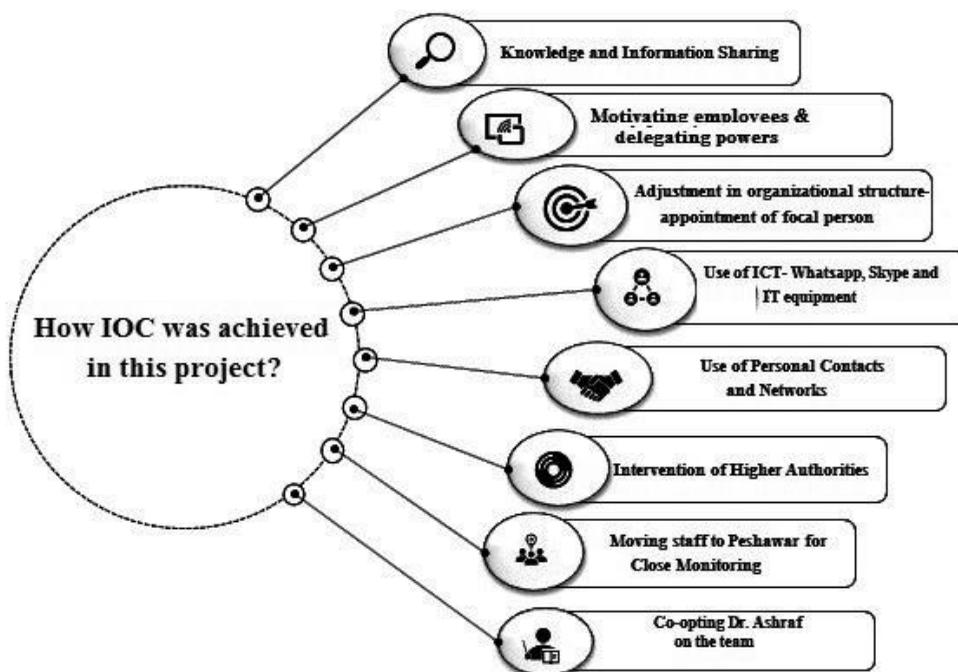
<sup>16</sup> Kristin Behfar, Jeanne Brett, and Mary C. Kern, *Managing Multicultural Teams, Organizational Collaboration*, 1st ed., vol. (In book: *Organizational Collaboration*, 2020), 155–64.

<sup>17</sup> George Bucăța and Alexandru Marius Rizescu, "The Role of Communication in Enhancing Work Effectiveness of an Organization," *Land Forces Academy Review*, no. 22 (1) (March 2017).

in Peshawar for the sake of maintaining transparent and frequent communication channel which was important in an environment where the local staff was divided and demoralized and the international partners were frustrated on procedural delays, non-cooperation from local authorities and lack of commitment. Azmat, a Pushto-speaking officer who previously worked in DAM KP, was sent to Peshawar to create some leverage through common language during the uninstallation phase of the project.

DOAM, being a research organization, lacked openness and a sharing culture. In such an environment, employees are incentivized on personal achievements and gains because promotions and other perks are decided on the basis of individual contribution made in the field of research. This had fanned a culture of non-cooperation and individualism throughout the entire organization. The horizontal communication channels among employees of the same level without a senior manager are equally important.<sup>18</sup> The DG encouraged and motivated members of the team to engage with each other through WhatsApp, Skype or telephone for better communication and coordination and that worked to good impact. The following figure shows the steps taken to develop IOC in this project:

**Figure 5**



<sup>18</sup> Wendy Bloisi, Curtis W Cook, and Phillip L Hunsaker, *Management and Organisational Behaviour*, Open WorldCat, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead (UK): McGraw-Hill Education, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

This case study is a good example of improvisation in the public sector. There was a lack of policy, institutional knowledge and coordination between organizations on loaning an artefact of this size to a foreign entity for exhibition. However, through dedicated efforts, the leader managed to make provisions in the existing policies and procedures and the team delivered under his directions. This attitude needs to be widely practiced in public services, where many opportunities are lost just because of cumbersome processes and absence of systematic regulations, etc. The processes need to be simplified for efficient functioning of the public sector.

## **Lessons Learnt**

The Buddha statue reached the exhibition on time, but the relentless efforts magnified the image of Mahmood on many aspects and added invaluable experience to his career. He recalled that if practiced earlier, the following steps could have saved a lot of hard work and delays:

### **(i) Missing SOPs**

DOAM lost its valuable data, records and documents during the process of devolution. As a result, there were no SOPs for carrying out an international assignment of this magnitude. Mahmood realized that he should have appointed a team to prepare a manual covering all aspects for handling of international exhibitions, soon after joining the department. If the “blue print” had been available, the efforts would have been more organized and targeted. For instance, the Ministry of Commerce and Industries had no role in issuing of the NOC for the export of the object, yet a few days were lost in sending them a letter to issue the NOC and receiving their subsequent reply.

### **(ii) Digitization of Record**

There is sufficient evidence available that use of digital technology accelerates processes of governance. As Mahmood was not from the regular cadre of DOAM, it took him some time to reach out to the grassroots level of the departmental ailments. Along with other high-profile documents, the conservation reports of the invaluable antiquities were also missing from the records of DOAM and DAM KP. Had he been able to discover the issue earlier, he might have settled it on time. But the conservation report of the statue could not be prepared until it was required by the shipping company. The report was an essential formality for customs’ clearance. John also kept on asking for the conservation report to know the exact height and weight of the statue for insurance purpose. An emergency conservation report was prepared in the nick of time.

### **(iii) Coordination Forum at Functional Level**

DOAM and its provincial counterparts had not been in the habit of coordinating with each other; consequently, no efforts were made to establish any engaging platforms such as a coordination committee at the management level after devolution of the department in 2011. Mahmood realized that during the execution of this project that he had overlooked this important aspect. If an effective coordination mechanism had been in place, officers of these two organizations could have met at least every three months. Resultantly, he might have been in a position to better control the process.

## **Recommendations**

The episode of the Buddha statue travelling from Peshawar to Zurich has left not only memories, but it has also taught invaluable lessons at the same time. Based on the analysis and learning, the following measures are recommended for consideration:

### **(i) Promoting Cultural Diplomacy**

Pakistan has great potential for religious tourism which was very well realized by all stakeholders of this event. These types of activities can be proposed to other countries, like Japan, Korea, Thailand, etc. with assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Efforts should also be made to exhibit artefacts of other countries in Pakistan.

### **(ii) Promoting the Institution of Museums**

Museums have special importance in modern societies. In order to promote museum activities, the governments should allocate proper funds in their budgets. Museums should have a specialized service cadre so that they can meet the new challenges in the arena of exhibitions of art and artefacts. Museums should also establish partnerships and linkages with universities, research and educational institutes, both in Pakistan and abroad.

### **(iii) Setting up a Coordination Committee of Organizations Dealing with Museums and Archaeology**

It is high time to set up a coordination forum/committee comprising DOAM and organizations dealing with archaeology and museums in the provinces. Such a coordination mechanism will be useful in creating synergy in their work and in holding similar events more efficiently in future. Members from private museums may be included in this forum for better preservation and promotion of rich culture of the country.

#### **(iv) Increasing Organizational Performance Through Capacity-Building**

In order to create an enabling environment, the re-structuring of organizations dealing with archaeology and museums at all levels may be carried out vis-à-vis their revised mandate. The important records of these organizations may be digitized and important information published, circulated and placed on websites. Moreover, vacant positions, especially of heads of organizations, may be filled on priority basis through a competitive process.

#### **(v) Simplifying Business Process for Holding International Exhibitions**

After devolution, there is a duplication of procedures for holding such international events. These processes should be simplified and reduced. For example, there is a condition of engaging an insurance agency from Pakistan to send antiquities for exhibition abroad. This condition should be waived off in order to reduce cost of insurance and transportation. Similarly, after the approval of the Federal Cabinet, the concerned provincial minister or department may be authorized to grant approval to avoid delay in such projects. Information regarding antiquities should be shared with Web-Based One Customs (WeBOC) system of Pakistan Customs in order to expedite processes at ports, etc. Such proposals may be discussed in the coordination forum proposed above.

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