



INDIA'S HERITAGE PROJECTS ABROAD

REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD





CONTENTS

2

Introduction to the book

5

Message from the External Affairs
Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar

6

Role of Archaeological Survey of India

10

World Heritage Sites

54

National Heritage Sites, Monuments & Projects

96

Minor Projects

INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, India has played an invaluable and significant role in shaping the history, culture and traditions of its neighbouring nations. With a rich civilization dating back to almost 8,000 years, India has partnered with nations across the globe in a range of capacities. Be it through trade, defense, technology, culture or more, the world's largest democracy has steadily built and fostered relations with other nations across many millennia. Riding on the back of its own rich and diverse cultural heritage, the country has continued to influence cultures and shape traditions into the modern era. Restoring heritage sites and monuments that define the cultural landscape of a nation is an imperative initiative in this direction which India continues to undertake.

As part of its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India's cultural diplomacy has extended to nations that are geographically as well as culturally close, such as participating in the UNESCO-led restoration project of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan or the excavation of prominent Buddhist archaeological sites in Nepal. For instance, in 1980, India was the first country to respond to Cambodia's appeal to the world community for assistance in the restoration of Angkor Wat. Subsequently, the ASI worked in close cooperation with the Cambodian government to restore and conserve the world-famous Angkor Wat.

India has been reaching out, with its expertise and experience through the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), for the restoration and conservation of ancient cultural heritage monuments and temples in the South-East Asian region at Ta Prohm and Preah Vihear in Cambodia, My Son in Vietnam and Wat Phou in Lao PDR. Similar restoration and conservation projects are already being taken up in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and other parts of the world. New projects for excavation, restoration and conservation of Buddhist sites located in Central Asia are under consideration. More than 55 heritage restoration projects worth Rs 340 crore (approximately US\$ 50 million) have been completed in 25 countries. There are almost 50 more ongoing or planned projects on bilateral mode in 12 countries at an approximate expenditure of Rs 1,000 crore. These include the ongoing projects in five World Heritage Sites as well. To give further fillip to our cultural heritage works abroad, a new division of the MEA—the Development Partnership Administration (DPA IV) was established In January 2020, to serve as the nodal point for heritage restoration projects undertaken abroad by the Government of India.

India's development partnership is now also delving in newer areas like preservation of manuscripts and scriptures, post-disaster monument reconstruction and digital documentation of monuments in partner countries.

As the nation grows from strength to strength and emerges as a global economic powerhouse, India continues to bring back to life the historical and civilizational links that the nation cherishes with her neighbours as well as those beyond her immediate horizons.

INDIA'S HERITAGE PROJECTS ABROAD

REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD



A Public Diplomacy initiative of
THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA





DR. S. JAISHANKAR

*Minister of External Affairs,
Government of India*

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DR. S. JAISHANKAR

.Ex enisimp oritat. Ipsaperum eumquas et oditatem aut quae nonse sim ipsunte offictae idias volum hil id et delit, volo elit esendae ne con re recaborum is arum cone namustibus,Ovid qui te cum quaepra tempori oriatu mquist, etum id quiberi tiosapeles est voluptat quo exped qui que od quiae voluptatiam facimusam quas eum quia sum rem. Nequas dolla eturibus volupta tessimi lignis doleculpa conempo reiur, il inum, sitiorum autem litatur simos quiam nusaper spedit a noneturendae dolupti bustibus remque aute secaborem quodit ate volo berferem lab in et evellandita nia quiae nam vollendem volupta tisquamet pos assum et di temqui comnima sim repeditius, comnihic tem dolupite pario con none explabo. Us niti quaspicidit, que cupta natat mossunt emperestibus mo tet estrum faceptatur aut omnihil iuntios adiossi de vent invent eumquos anda ducidit arit, que natisci eturem repro eum quibusapid qui nestota sperum unto blaut.Ex enisimp oritat. Ipsaperum eumquas et oditatem aut quae nonse sim ipsunte offictae idias volum hil id et delit, volo elit esendae ne con re recaborum is arum cone namustibus,Ovid qui te cum quaepra tempori oriatu mquist, etum id quiberi tiosapeles est voluptat quo exped qui que od quiae voluptatiam facimusam quas eum quia sum rem.

Nequas dolla eturibus volupta tessimi lignis doleculpa conempo reiur, il inum, sitiorum autem litatur simos quiam nusaper spedit a noneturendae dolupti bustibus remque aute secaborem quodit ate volo berferem lab in et evellandita nia quiae nam vollendem volupta tisquamet pos assum et di temqui comnima sim repeditius, comnihic tem dolupite pario con none explabo. Us niti quaspicidit, que cupta natat mossunt emperestibus mo tet estrum faceptatur aut omnihil iuntios adiossi de vent invent eumquos anda ducidit arit, que natisci eturem repro eum quibusapid qui nestota sperum unto blautEx enisimp oritat. Ipsaperum eumquas et oditatem aut quae nonse sim ipsunte offictae idias volum hil id et delit, volo elit esendae ne con re recaborum is arum cone namustibus,Ovid qui te cum quaepra tempori oriatu mquist, etum id quiberi tiosapeles est voluptat quo exped qui que od quiae voluptatiam facimusam quas eum quia sum rem. Nequas dolla eturibus volupta tessimi lignis doleculpa conempo reiur, il inum, sitiorum autem litatur simos quiam nusaper spedit a noneturendae dolupti bustibus remque aute secaborem quodit ate volo berferem lab in et evellandita nia quiae nam vollendem volupta tisquamet pos assum et di temqui comnima sim repeditius, comnihic tem dolupite pario con none explabo. Us niti quaspicidit, que cupta natat mossunt emperestibus mo tet estrum faceptatur aut omnihil iuntios adiossi de vent invent eumquos anda ducidit arit, que natisci eturem repro eum quibusapid qui nestota sperum unto blaut.Ex enisimp oritat. Ipsaperum eumquas et oditatem aut quae nonse sim ipsunte offictae idias volum hil id et delit, volo elit esendae ne con re recaborum is arum cone namustibus,Ovid qui te cum quaepra tempori oriatu mquist, etum id quiberi tiosapeles est voluptat quo exped qui que od quiae voluptatiam facimusam quas eum quia sum rem. Nequas.

ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

In November 2021, India was elected as a member of the United Nations World Heritage Committee for a four-year term, soon after being re-elected to the executive board of the UNESCO for the same term. Besides defining the use of the World Heritage Fund and allocating financial assistance upon requests to State Parties, the Committee is primarily responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention drafted over a seven-year period from 1965-72, concerning the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Under the aegis of the Committee, UNESCO has so far protected a total of 1,154 cultural, natural and mixed properties worldwide as World Heritage Sites.

All over the world, it is increasingly becoming unquestionably significant for countries to preserve their cultural heritage and safeguard it as part of their legacy and national identity for generations to come. India's election as a member of the World Heritage Committee goes to show the role that the country's prime heritage conservation body, the Archaeological Survey of India or the ASI has played in the excavation, restoration and preservation efforts of important monuments and historical sites, not just in India but also in other countries near and far.

Set up in 1861 to preserve and conserve sites of national importance, the ASI has, over the years, become the custodian of over 3,700 monuments and archaeological sites in India. It has also expanded its expertise and knowledge of conservation beyond the borders to help foreign nations preserve their cultural and heritage structures. The agency has a long tradition of carrying out various archaeological works in neighbouring countries as well as those farther away, including explorations and excavations of ancient sites and conservation of monuments. In the process, the ASI has brought back to life the historical and civilisational links that India has cherished with its neighbours and the others through the years.

From one of its earliest excavation, exploration and salvage operations in Nubia, Egypt in 1960—a project that ultimately led the UNESCO to initiate the drafting of the World Heritage Convention—to excavation efforts in Nepal and Bahrain, to the pioneering conservation efforts at the Bamiyan Buddhas of Afghanistan, the early years of ASI's international work laid the groundwork for its conservation efforts in foreign nations for the years to come. As part of India's cultural diplomacy, several projects wholly supported and funded by the Ministry of External Affairs, have been taken up by the ASI for preserving and restoring India's cultural legacy abroad.





WORLD HERITAGE SITES

ANGKOR WAT

The Government of India through the expertise and relentless efforts of the ASI have restored Angkor Wat in Cambodia, an architectural masterpiece and a UNESCO World Heritage site, to much of its former glory making it the best-preserved temple in the entire Angkor complex



In his keynote address at the third International Conference on ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilizational Links on October 07, 2021, the Minister of State for External Affairs Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh noted how the restoration of cultural and heritage sites in the region has added a new dimension to the multifaceted and excellent relations shared by India and the ASEAN countries. "Prominent among them have been the restoration of Angkor Wat in Cambodia," he said, adding that efforts are ongoing to piece the heritage of the past and convert them to living monuments drawing the attention of scholars and tourists across the world. "The ancient socio-cultural relations and linkages have also found contemporary expression in the form of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation, a sub-regional grouping aimed at reviving cooperation between the peoples of the Mekong and Ganga river basins in the fields of tourism, education, culture and people-to-people contacts."

It was in 1980, given the common heritage and shared cultural legacies between the two nations, that India became the first country to respond to Cambodia's appeal to the world to save Angkor Wat in Siem Reap. In November that year, an initial team of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) experts visited the site to assess the damage and prepare a preliminary restoration plan. Later in 1982, another ASI team visited Cambodia to meticulously document the works to be undertaken. After the signing of a bilateral agreement between the Government of India and the Royal Government of Cambodia, the ASI started its restoration work in November 1986. Over the next seven years till 1993, various teams of officers and technical personnel from the ASI worked in close cooperation with the Cambodian government to restore and conserve Angkor Wat.

The famous temple is a powerful symbol of Cambodia and appears on its national flag. A source of immense national pride, it is also the country's prime attraction for visitors. The role played by the Government of India (GOI) and ASI in the restoration and conservation work done to bring back the lost glory to Angkor Wat is thus greatly ap-

preciated by the leadership of the Royal Government as well as the people of Cambodia.

The largest religious complex in the world, Angkor Wat was built in the early 12th century CE by the powerful Khmer Empire ruler, Suryavarman II as his state temple and capital city. Originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, it was later converted to a Buddhist temple towards the end of the 12th century under the commands of a new king, Jayavarman VII. As the best-preserved temple at the site, Angkor Wat is unusual among the Angkor temples—even though largely neglected after the 16th century, it was never completely abandoned and remained a significant religious centre. Instrumental in the formation of modern concepts of built cultural heritage globally, Angkor Wat was nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1992.

Combining two basic plans of classical Khmer temple architecture—the temple mountain and the galleried tem-

ple, Angkor Wat is designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the devas in Hindu mythology. Standing as a massive three-tiered pyramid crowned by five lotus-like towers rising 65 metres from the ground level, the temple is visually, architecturally and artistically awe-inspiring. Surrounded by a moat and an exterior wall measuring 1300m x 1500m, the temple covers an area of 1km square and consists of three levels surmounted by a central tower.

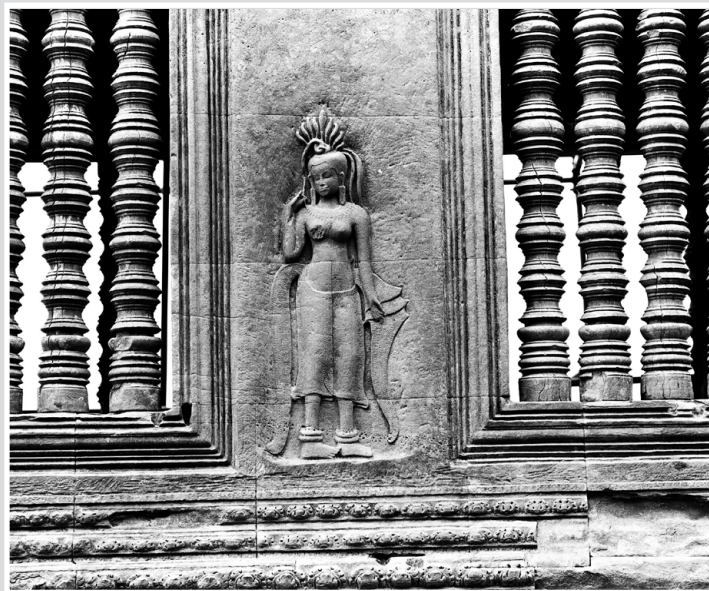
Integrated within the architecture of the building and one of the prime reasons for its fame is Angkor Wat's extensive decoration, which predominantly takes the form of bas-relief friezes and carvings. The exterior wall of the lower level displays the most extraordinary bas-reliefs, depicting stories and characters from Ramayana and Mahabharata, the historical wars of Suryavarman II, scenes from Heaven and Hell on the south wall, and the popular mythological event of 'Churning of the Ocean Milk' on



(From Top): North West corner of Ranga Mancha (Before Conservation); North West corner of Ranga Mancha (After Conservation)



(From Left): South Central entrance porch of Third enclosure (Before conservation); South Central entrance porch of Third enclosure (After conservation)



⤴
(From Left): Apsara near central gate of east interior wall second enclosure (before treatment); Apsara near central gate of east interior wall second enclosure (after treatment)

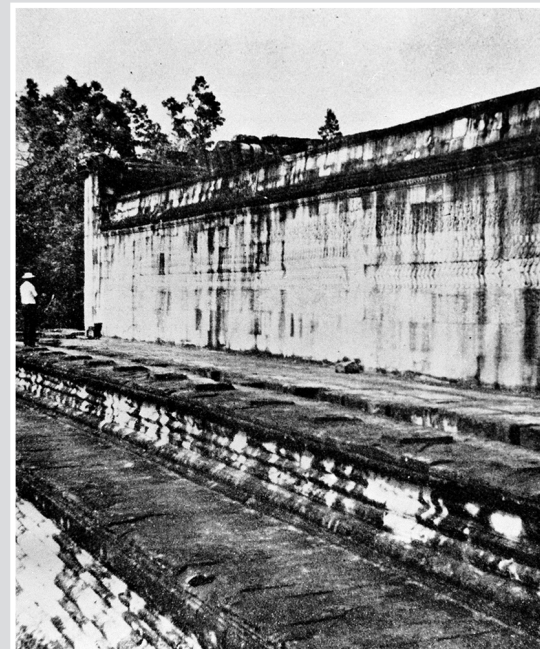
the east wall. The temple interior is not as densely carved, but still sports hundreds of fine carvings of apsaras and scenes from Hindu mythologies.

The central tower appears on a tiered base 40- 42 meters high above the upper level. On the third level, it houses four Buddha images, each facing a different cardinal point. This highlights the fact that even though Angkor Wat was constructed as a Hindu temple, it has served as a Buddhist place of worship ever since Buddhism became Cambodia's dominant religion in the 14th century.

It was the artistic legacy of Angkor Wat and other Khmer The Angkor Wat and other Khmer monuments in Angkor were taken over by the French in 1863 when the latter adopted Cambodia as a protectorate. Following French colonization of Cambodia, considerable restoration work in Angkor Wat was undertaken in the 20th century. Teams of archaeologists and labourers pushed back the jungle that had taken over the ruins and unearthed expanses of stone. Angkor Wat

attracted the attention of a wider European audience when a life-sized replica was displayed in the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1931. However, following Cambodia's independence from France in 1953 and the subsequent Khmer Rouge reign in the 70s and 80s, restoration work was interrupted and the temple suffered damages during the civil war. The Conservation d'Angkor which was set up by the French in 1908 to restore the temple was also disbanded in 1975.

The Indian effort to conserve Angkor Wat was thus the first such major restoration project undertaken in recent history. During the 7-year period of ASI's restoration, several portions of the Angkor Wat temple were conserved while maintaining its original, ancient look. These included the northern embankment of the moat, the gateway and semi-vaults of the fourth enclosure, the Esplanade, the Samudra Manthana Gallery of the third enclosure, the northern corner of the second enclosure, the northern library as well as the central



⤵
(From Top): Samudramanathan gallery_south west of 3rd enclosure (Before conservation); Samudramanathan gallery_south west of 3rd enclosure (After conservation)

tower of the temple. The monument covered a surface of 200,000 square metres with 9,000 "architectural members". It reset 2000 cubic metres of stone and more than 1,00,000 square metres of surface area was cleaned and restored. Conservation work undertaken by the ASI at Angkor Wat has been hailed as pioneering and exemplary, and appreciated by conservation and heritage experts around the world.

Following in the footsteps of India's restoration efforts, a number of other countries such as France, Japan and China are currently involved in various Angkor Wat conservation projects. The German Apsara Conservation Project is also working to protect the devatas and other bas-reliefs from damage. All such work over the years, beginning with the ASI, have restored Angkor Wat to much of its former glory and made it the best-preserved temple in the entire Angkor complex.

This has resulted in Angkor Wat becoming a major tourist attraction with footfall increasing from merely 7,000-odd visitors in 1993 to over 2.6 million visitors in 2018, according to the latest government figures. The attractive tourist destination now offers a number of experiences to visitors, including tuk tuk rides at sunrise, elevated perspectives of the temples and surrounding areas from a helicopter or tethered balloon, water blessing by Buddhist monks, stunning sunset photography in the reflection pools, and more.

The restoration of Angkor Wat pioneered by ASI has, thus, served as a sustainable endeavour that has been replicated by other nations and resulted in an exponential growth of tourism for Cambodia.



TA PROHM

Popularly known as Tree Temple, Ta Prohm at the Angkor Heritage Site in Cambodia is being conserved through a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to showcase the unique co-existence of trees and built structures in this 12th century 'Rajavihara' through MEA's development cooperation partnership

the pandemic may have disrupted life and work around the world, but the Ministry of External Affairs' efforts of engagement with Southeast Asia under the framework of the Act East Policy has continued uninterrupted, including important restoration works in the region such as the Ta Prohm temple at the Angkor World Heritage Site in Cambodia. According to the Ministry's 2020-21 Annual Report brought out by the Policy Planning and Research Division, "Despite Covid-19, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) continued to undertake, as planned, the 3rd phase of the restoration and preservation work at the Ta Prohm Temple in the Angkor Wat Park, which had started in November 2016." The third and final phase of this project is expected to be completed by 2026.

MEA's longest running heritage restoration project in the Angkor Complex, the agreement to restore the Ta Prohm temple was signed in 2002, when the then Prime Minister of India, the late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Cambodia. At the time, the restoration project was considered too challenging, ambitious even, given the condition of the site. Popularly known as Tree Temple, Ta Prohm had been deliberately left

untouched for years in order to demonstrate the interface between the built environment and nature. Throughout the site, massive 70-foot-tall tropical trees hold the intricately carved structures firmly in their grasp, while the roots of the trees snake through the collapsed piles of stones. The trees growing out of the ruins are in fact, the most distinctive feature of Ta Prohm. Conservationists believed that it would be dangerous to cut down some of the trees as they were supporting the structure of the temple itself.

Hence, the ASI adopted a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to deal with the complexities of the restoration process, including collaborations with professionals from the fields of archaeology, history structural engineering, hydrology, geology, geotechnology, arboriculture and architecture. Extensive research was also conducted by experts from the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun for conservation of the beautiful trees inside the Ta Prohm temple premises. An appropriate conservation strategy was henceforth developed for the monument and the Ta Prohm Project was formally launched in February 2004 during the Ta Prohm Symposium, with the aim to highlight the authenticity, integrity and conservation of the unique co-existence of trees and built forms.

Built in the 12th century as a monastic Buddhist temple complex within the Angkor World Heritage Site in Siem Reap, Cambodia, this significant monument was originally known as Rajavihara or Royal Temple. An inscription in the temple states that it was built in 1186 CE by Jayavarman VII as a citadel for his mother. The main image of Prajnaparamita, the personification of wisdom, was also modeled on the king's mother. Subsequently, the temple was given the name of Ta Prohm, wherein 'Ta' means ancestor and 'Prohm' refers to Brahma, the Hindu God of Creation.

One of the finest specimens of Khmer creativity and architecture of the Angkorean era, Ta Prohm is built in the Bayon style with a concentric plan and five rectangular enclosures and entrances on all four directions. Besides mythological figures and detailed carvings, the temple is also decorated with apsara figures and Naga canopies. The temple complex is divided into various sectors by means of classified arcades and open courtyards. Multiple enclosure walls served the purpose of segregating various communities while enabling the monks to co-exist with the layman. The innermost enclosure houses the main shrine, while other shrines are located inside the 2nd and 3rd enclosures.

Symmetry was emphasized in the layout of this temple with respect to the central coordinate axis. The east-west axis, associated with the rising and setting of the sun in Indian temple architecture, was particularly highlighted. The temple is built of dry sandstone masonry with laterite core in the foundation and has corbelled vaulted roof over the galleries and entrances. The area around the temple is covered with thick vegetation comprising of evergreen tropical trees, with silk-cotton and strangler fig being the dominant varieties. Many of the trees have grown right on top of the temple structure and their roots have penetrated into the foundation as well as into the superstructure, resulting in dislodged masonry.

Since February 2004, the Archaeological Survey of India has been working to restore and conserve Ta Prohm, in close cooperation with the Authority for Protection of Angkor & the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA) and under the guidance of International Coordination Committee for Safeguarding the Angkor. ASI's conservation work is complemented by archaeological investigations of the local Cambodian archaeologists from APSARA. With an objective to retain maximum authenticity and integrity, the technique of *ánastylosis* involving the re-assembling

(From Left): Entrance Gopura of 4th enclosure west (Before Conservation); Entrance Gopura of 4th enclosure west (After Conservation). (Facing page, from left): Causeway connecting 3rd and 4th enclosure west (Before Conservation); Causeway connecting 3rd and 4th enclosure west (After Conservation)





(From left): Third enclosure gallery, eastern side (Before conservation); Third enclosure gallery, eastern side (After conservation)

of existing dismembered parts has been adopted. Appropriate treatment of the subsoil was carried out and sandstone blocks of the floor and plinth were reset. The original broken stone elements of the floor, columns and roof were repaired with appropriate materials and threaded stainless steel rods.

Of the five assigned places, conservation and restoration work on four have been completed in the first two phases. This included the Third Enclosure Gallery in the South Wing, the Causeway connecting the third and fourth enclosures on the west, the Gopura on the Fourth Enclosure West and the entrance Gopura on the Fifth Enclosure West including laterite walls on both sides, as well as the Northern Gallery of the Hall of Dancers. Currently, conservation and restoration work on the Southern Gallery of Hall of Dancers and the Eastern Gopura on the Fifth Enclosure is in progress in Phase 3, which began in 2016.

Besides all these efforts, an alternate drainage system was also installed to drain out storm water into the moats, as it was discovered that stagnation of storm water during the rainy season was affecting the foundations of

various structures. The project also aimed at the physical protection of the existing natural heritage, environmental and ecological protection with the overall conservation plan. The ASI sought help from the Forest Research Institute (FRI) of the Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun, for the maintenance and conservation of trees in Ta Prohm Temple complex. Based on FRI's study, detailed tree-to-tree prescriptions have been given to the APSARA National Authority.

The restoration work undertaken by the ASI with the grant provided by the Government of India has been well appreciated by the Cambodian leadership as well as the local and international organizations. To facilitate tourist movement even as the conservation work is on, temporary wooden walkways and staircases across the laterite wall have been constructed. The atmospheric combination of trees growing out of the ruins and the dense rainforest surroundings have made Ta Prohm one of the most popular and photogenic temples in Angkor for visitors. With the restoration work nearing completion in a few more years, it will become even more sought after as a must-visit destination in Cambodia.



Above: Hall of dancers facing north (before conservation);
Below: Hall of dancers facing north (after conservation)





PREAH VIHEAR

A World Heritage Site, the Preah Vihear Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is among the latest international restoration projects of the MEA and ASI, with an aim to preserve this 11th century temple known for its magnificent Khmer architecture



»
(Clockwise from top): Gopura,
Main shrine, southern face;
gopura along with causeway;
Gopura, Main shrine.
Facing page: Nagaraja
courtyard, south to north

t

he newest international restoration project to be taken up by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Archaeological Survey of India, work on the Preah Vihear temple in Cambodia began in 2021. An MoU for the restoration of this UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lord Shiva was signed in August 2018, with India serving as the co-chair of the prestigious International Coordination Committee of Preah Vihear (ICC). Subsequently, restoration and preservation work by ASI began at the site last year, and is expected to be completed by 2030.

The site of the temple is particularly well preserved, mainly due to its remote location in the jungle. It is also exceptional for the quality of its architecture as well as its carved stone ornamentation, which is well adapted

to the natural environment and the religious functions of the temple. In its 32nd session in July 2008, the World Heritage Committee inscribed Preah Vihear Temple on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Following the listing, UNESCO instituted an International Coordinating Committee (ICC) for Safeguarding and Development of the historical site of Preah Vihear Temple in 2014, of which the Governments of India and China serve as the Co-chairs.

During the State visit of Prime Minister Hun Sen to India on January 27, 2018, both governments agreed to cooperate further in the areas of conservation of temples to reinforce the heritage and cultural linkages between the two countries. In this regard, India reaffirmed its commitment to undertake restoration and conservation work at the ancient temple of Preah Vihear. To formalize this intent, both countries signed an MoU in August 2018



during the visit of late Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, to Cambodia. According to the MoU, the project is being executed by the ASI in coordination with the National Authority of Preah Vihear (NAPV) and in close consultation with the ICC of UNESCO.

Built in 11th century CE by Suryavarman I and Suryavarman II, Preah Vihear is an ancient Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in his manifestations as the mountain gods Sikkheshvara and Bhadresvara. An inscription found at the temple provides a detailed account of Suryavarman II studying sacred rituals, celebrating religious festivals and gifting precious items, including white parasols, golden bowls and elephants, to his spiritual advisor, the aged Brahmin Divakara Pandita. According to the inscription, Pandita himself took great interest in the temple and donated to it a golden statue of a dancing Shiva, also known as Nataraja, in 12th century CE.

Preah Vihear Temple features four levels and four courtyards that comprise of five Gopuras, or entrance pavilions sometimes surmounted by towers. The temple is composed of a series of sanctuaries linked by a system of pavements and staircases over an 800-metre-long axis that dates back to the first half of the 11th century CE. The temple complex runs along the 800 metre (2,600 ft) north-south axis, facing the plains to the north from which it is now cut off by the international border. A causeway and steps rise up the hill towards the sanctuary, which sits on the cliff top at the southern end of the complex. Although this structure is very different from the temple mountain found at Angkor, it serves the same purpose as a stylized representation of Mount Meru, the mythical home of the gods.

The Temple of Preah Vihear is an outstanding masterpiece of Khmer architecture, in terms of

plan, decoration and relationship to the spectacular landscape environment. Preah Vihear temple can be described in eight parts—front stone stairway, Nagaraja Courtyard, Gopura I to Gopura V, and the Palace area. The integrity of the property has, to a degree, been compromised by the absence of part of the promontory from the perimeter.

At present, only Gopura V along with the Nagaraja Courtyard have been given to India for conservation and restoration and initial process of documentation is underway.

Besides India, China, Russia, Belgium and the United States have also contributed financial aid for restoring portions of Preah Vihear. Apart from being a shining example of international solidarity, the restoration efforts will help in the preservation of the magnificent temple and ultimately invigorate tourism.



>>
(From left): along with buttress facing north; western face.



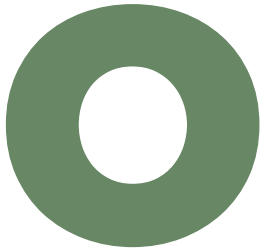
<<
(From top): Gopura Pediment, facing south; Gopura, South East; Gopura, South West.





MY SON

Restoration work by the ASI at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of My Son Sanctuary, an exceptional example of the introduction of Hindu architecture to Southeast Asia, currently in its final phase



On May 27, 2020, External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar tweeted an applause for the ASI team working at restoring and conserving the Cham monuments at the My Son World Heritage Site in Vietnam.

"Reaffirming a civilizational connect. Monolithic sandstone Shiv Linga of 9th century is latest find in ongoing conservation project. Applaud @ASIGol team for their work at Cham Temple Complex... A great cultural example of India's development partnership," the tweet read.

Since 2017, India has been working to restore the great Cham temples in the My Son valley of Vietnam. In May 2020, a 9th century monolithic sandstone Shiva lingam was unearthed from a depth of 2 metres, after months of meticulous excavation work by a four-member ASI team alongside a group of Vietnamese archaeologists. Nearly 3-metre tall, the latest is believed to be the most magnificent among the six lingas discovered so far, and has been recognized as a National Treasure of Vietnam.

An MoU for the restoration project in My Son was signed between India and Vietnam in October 2014. The project aims to highlight the importance of a Hinduism-based Cham civilization in age-old cultural links between India and Vietnam. The project scope includes restoration of three groups of temples—H, K and A at My Son complex. The My Son Sanctuary bears testimony to the cultural grandeur of the Hindu kingdom of Champa. In 1999, the Sanctuary was inscribed in UNESCO's World Heritage Convention list, with the ICOMOS referring to the My Son Sanctuary as an exceptional example of cultural interchange and an introduction of Hindu architecture of the Indian subcontinent into Southeast Asia.

Located in the Quang Nam province of central Vietnam, the My Son temple complex is known to have been built between the 4th and 14th centuries by various rulers of the Champa Kingdom, an Indianized kingdom of the Austronesian ethnic group known as Chams. As early as the 4th century, the first Champa king Bhadravarman had built a hall for the worship of



Before and after conservation of Temple A10 of Group A at My Son Vietnam.

Lord Shiva and put up a commemorative stele dedicating the entire My Son valley to Shiva or Lord Bhadreswara. Successive kings continued to endow the 300-hectare valley with fine temples, but it was under King Giaya Simhavaram that most of the finest surviving architectural monuments were built in the 10th century, resulting in a remarkable architectural ensemble.

The tower-temples found today cover the period from the 10th to the 13th century; though built in different architectural styles, these are all constructed in fired brick with stone pillars. They are also decorated with sandstone bas-reliefs depicting scenes from Hindu mythology. When built, each temple had a main tower-temple or the kalan, a roofed walkway or the mandapa, a nearby smaller building or kosagraha to house the valuables belonging to the deity, and a gopura leading to the temple complex.

Each tower-temple was designed to represent Hindu mythology, with the tower itself symbolizing

the sacred mountain Meru at the centre of the universe. The base or bhumiloka represents the human world, the main structure or the bhumiloka symbolises the spiritual world, and the three-storied roofs or suarloka signify Kailasa, the mountain sacred to Shiva. The fact that these architectural elements and their names are familiar not only to Indian archaeologists but even to the common man in India is a testimony to the strength of the cultural relationship between India and Vietnam in particular, and Southeast Asia in general.

In the early years of the 20th century, French archaeologist Henry Parmentier studied and recorded about 70 of these temples that remain standing. He classified them into eight major groups, named alphabetically from A to H. Today, the temples are still referred to by his denomination, with three smaller isolated temples (K, L and M) also added to the overall World Heritage inscription.



Before and after restoration of the monolithic sandstone 3-metre tall Shivalinga built in 9th century CE



Preliminary conservation work carried out by French archaeologists in the first half of the 20th century were largely undone. Severe damage was also inflicted on these temples during the Vietnam War, when the whole region became the target for military bombing and minelaying. Indian efforts for the conservation of these magnificent remains started in 2010, when ASI experts visited My Son as part of a Cultural Exchange programme. The experts recommended restoration work on three of the most important temple groups, namely A, H and K. Many of these tower ruins have become fully covered with thick vegetation and fallen debris. War time destruction had caused severe damage to many of these temples, including collapse of the walls and roofs. ASI prepared a detailed action plan for restoration, including careful removal of fallen debris, collection and stacking of bricks, structural conservations, recreation of original mortar material and providing a drainage system for surface rainwater.

With formal work commencing in 2017, ASI has already completed restoration of the H and K groups, with works on the largest group of 13 tower temples in the A group, especially the temple A-10, currently in the final stages. The A-10 temple dates back to the 9th century, and is one of the largest in My Son. Most of the temple, including its Garbagriha has suffered disturbances, causing the collapse of the pedestals and the Shivalinga. Until the arrival of the ASI team, it had not been possible to lift the Shiva Lingam from the depths, and piece the pedestals and other artefacts together. This work has now been completed, with the magnificent monolithic Shiva Lingam with its arches and ornate Dong Duong style pedestal designs, put together.

Quang Nam Province where My Son is located is the only province in Vietnam that is home to two World Heritage Sites— Hoi, an ancient town and My Son Sanctuary. Thanks to its stature as a monument of universal outstanding heritage value, My Son enjoys a large tourist footfall and ASI's work here has enabled visitors to enjoy the unique heritage of the Cham. India's expertise in restoration of these temples and the resulting transformation of My Son as a major tourist attraction is greatly appreciated by the Vietnamese authorities.



«
Facing page: Before and after conservation of Group H at My Son, Vietnam
This page: (Above) Before and after conservation of Group K at My Son Vietnam; (Below): Layout of My Son where the project restoration and conservation of Cham monuments of A.H.K group by ASI is in process.

VAT PHOU

India's efforts at restoring the Vat Phou complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an outstanding example of the integration of a symbolic landscape of great spiritual significance to its natural surroundings, have been an important aspect of our development partnership in our bilateral relationship.





Left: Porch Northern Quadrangle Facing South (Before conservation);
 Right: Porch Northern Quadrangle Facing South (After conservation)
 Facing page: The courtyard of the Vat Phou Temple (before and after restoration)

b etween the Mekong River and the Phou Khao mountain range in the Champasak District of Lao PDR is located the Vat Phou temple complex. The nearby Mekong has been known for centuries for its meandering course; nearby the Phou Khao mountain range has been revered for at least 1500 years by local Shiva devotees for a natural rock formation resembling the shivlinga. This mountain top was locally referred to as the lingaparvata, and this became the primary cultural reason for the selection of the Champasak Plain for the construction of an elaborate temple complex dedicated for the worship of Shiva. Between the 11th to 13th centuries, Vat Phou became the focal point of a complex cultural landscape, extending eastwards from the Phou Khao Mountain in the west, till the Mekong River. Numerous temples, baray, water channels, quarries, historic field systems and other structures were built to make up what is known today as the Champasak Cultural Landscape.

Ancient builders used the natural linga of Phou Khao Mountain, the natural freshwater spring gushing out of it, and the gradually descending flood plains of the nearby Mekong River to lay out a temple complex on a linear plan of about 1,400 m along an east-west axis. The temple was designed for the pilgrim to approach the holy lingaparvata from the east, with the natural Lingaparvata being visible from behind the temple itself.

The temple complex is laid out over six progressively rising terraces, starting from barays (traditionally built artificial water bodies) from the eastern starting point, to two quadrangular buildings and then on to a central stone-paved walkway ultimately leading to the main shrine at the foothill of the mountain. Here, in the past, local devotees would have offered worship in the religious tradition of devotion to the "god who is the mountain". The central walkway threading through the six terraces with its intermittent stairways are a Hindu architectural metaphor for man's journey from the land of humans to the land of the gods. The main shivlinga within the shrine was always kept wet by the holy water





Left: North-side porch of the Ananda Temple, Myanmar, before and after chemical treatment



Left: North-side porch of the Ananda Temple, Myanmar, before and after chemical treatment



Left: North-side porch of the Ananda Temple, Myanmar, before and after chemical treatment before and after chemical treatment
Left: North-side porch of the Ananda Temple, Myanmar, before and after chemical treatment





coming from the natural spring gushing out from the lingaparvata. The entire main shrine was surrounded by fine carvings depicting the Hindu 'Trimurthi' (Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesheswara). Inscriptions in Sanskrit on walls in caves nearby testify to the intensity of the practice and worship.

Recognising the need for survival of Vat Phou Temple Complex for posterity, and that the monument is closely rooted from Indian religion and culture and to strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries, Government of India and Government of Lao PDR decided to implement measures for conservation and restoration of the World Heritage Site of Vat Phou Temple to preserve for future generations a testimony of the past. Soon after its designation as a World Heritage site in 2001, India's ASI prepared the detailed conservation project in 2005.

Teams have been on site since 2009. Today restoration

works on one of the two quadrangle of the Vat Phou premises have been completed and works on the other quadrangle and the central walkway are well underway. Interventions carried out include clearing of vegetation, structural stabilization, restoration of the original stone structures and restoration of drainage patterns.

India has partnered extensively with experts of Lao PDR in carrying out heritage restoration works at this remarkable complex of monuments, expressing the Hindu version of the relationship between nature and humanity, while bearing exceptional testimony to the cultures of south-east Asia. As a recognition of our partnership, Government of India awarded the prestigious Padma Shri in 2018 to eminent heritage conservationist Bounlap Keokangna, who served as the Deputy Director of the Vat Phou World Heritage during the crucial phases of India's project.

(From Left): A causeway in the temple complex (before and after restoration).
Facing page: A section of the Vat Phou Temple (before and after restoration); Northern Quadrangle (after restoration).



FRIDAY CORAL MOSQUE

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Malé Friday Mosque in Maldives displays coral stone architecture with coral carvings found nowhere else in the world. A unique heritage that India has been entrusted with restoring and conserving The UNESCO World





Tombs of sultans and the cemetery at the Friday Coral Mosque, Maldives. The complex has many coral stone mausoleums and tomb stones carved with unique designs that are the finest and the biggest collection in the country.

On his first overseas State visit to the Maldives after re-election in 2019, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced India's partnership with the islands nation to undertake the conservation and restoration work of the

Hukuru Miskiy, or Friday Mosque, located in the capital island of Malé. "There is no such mosque elsewhere in the world like this historical mosque made up of coral," he said in his address to the Majlis. The conservation of this most important heritage site of Maldives is being carried out with an Indian grant, as highlighted in the joint statement issued during the visit.

Hukuru Miskiy was built out of coral in 1658 and is the oldest mosque in continuous use in the Maldives. It stands on the site of the first mosque in the country and is also the biggest and one of the finest coral stone buildings in the world. Once commonly found, coral stone mosques in the Maldives are now a vanishing legacy. Of the ones that remain, six including the Hukuru Miskiy have been attributed by the UNESCO as holding 'Outstanding Universal Value', while the latter was also listed as a World Heritage Site in 2008.

According to UNESCO, "The Coral Stone Mosques of the Maldives represents a unique example in the Indian Ocean of an outstanding form of fusion coral stone architecture. They have Outstanding Universal Value as an example of a type of coral stone architecture with coral carvings and detailed lacquer work quality not seen in any part of the world." It also mentions that the architecture, construction and accompanying artistry of the coral stone mosques and Male's Friday Mosque in particular, represent the creative excellence and achievement of the Maldivian people.

It is to preserve this incredible heritage for generations to come that the Archaeological Survey of India has been entrusted with carrying out the restoration and structural conservation of the mosque. ASI teams deput-

ed to the Maldives have been working on the conservation project since December 2019. However, due to the pandemic, conservation work was severely impacted but has now resumed with the arrival of an ASI team in the Maldives in January, 2022. The project is expected to be completed by June 2023.

The Maldives boasts a cultural fusion with a history that dates back to 300 BCE. The local people practiced Buddhism until their conversion to Islam in 1153 CE. Construction in ancient Maldives was mainly dependent on the local availability of materials. Coral stone and timber were the only long-lasting materials available and coral stone became the primary building material for monumental buildings. Live reef coral boulders or Porite corals were removed from the seabed, cut to stone blocks while they were soft, and air-dried before being used for construction.

The coral stones were highly suitable for architectural and sculptural works in the mosques of Maldives. The walls of the mosques were built of finely shaped interlocking coral blocks. The amount of detail and decoration that went into these buildings display the extent of the skills that the local people harbour.

Stone construction in Maldives became more refined during the Islamic period. Stone building and especially stone carving techniques of the east African Swahili region influenced the already developed techniques of the Buddhist period. It is the fusion of these cultures that led to the emergence of new techniques that is seen in the coral stone mosques in Maldives, including the prominent Friday Mosque in Malé.

The Friday Mosque was built in 1658 CE during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Iskandhar I, replacing the original mosque built in 1153 by the first Muslim Sultan of Maldives, Sultan Mohamed Bin Abdullah. The mosque is built on a highly decorated coral stone platform with coral stonewalls and timber roof structure. The roof is three tiered with a modern metal roofing finish. It has an intricately decorated coffered ceiling with stepped recesses. The columns are made from coral stone as well.



The mosque complex has a large unique cylindrical minaret made from plastered coral stone and tied with metal bands. It is painted in white with decorative calligraphy. The complex also has many coral stone mausoleums and tomb stones carved with unique designs that are the finest and the biggest collection in the country. With its fine carvings and lacquer calligraphy and decoration, the quality of workmanship at Hukuru Miskiy is among the best in the Maldives.

It is also an outstanding example of the successful fusion of Indian Ocean seaborne cultures, wherein the ensemble is a material manifestation of cultural fusion and harmonization. The iconography showcases heavy influences from the Indian subcontinent, Swahili Africa, Arabia, and the Malay Archipelago. The building method also comes directly from the Indian subcontinent but is applied to coral stone—the only example in the world of this particular material being used in this manner.

The mosque building and the existing structures in the Friday Mosque complex in Malé have been maintained well and are in good condition except a few changes. Between 1987-1988, conservation work on the mosque was carried out by a team of Indian experts from the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property, with the assistance of a team from the National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research in Malé. Besides that, the latest efforts by India to restore and preserve the unique architectural heritage of the mosque is the only major conservation work at this World Heritage Site.

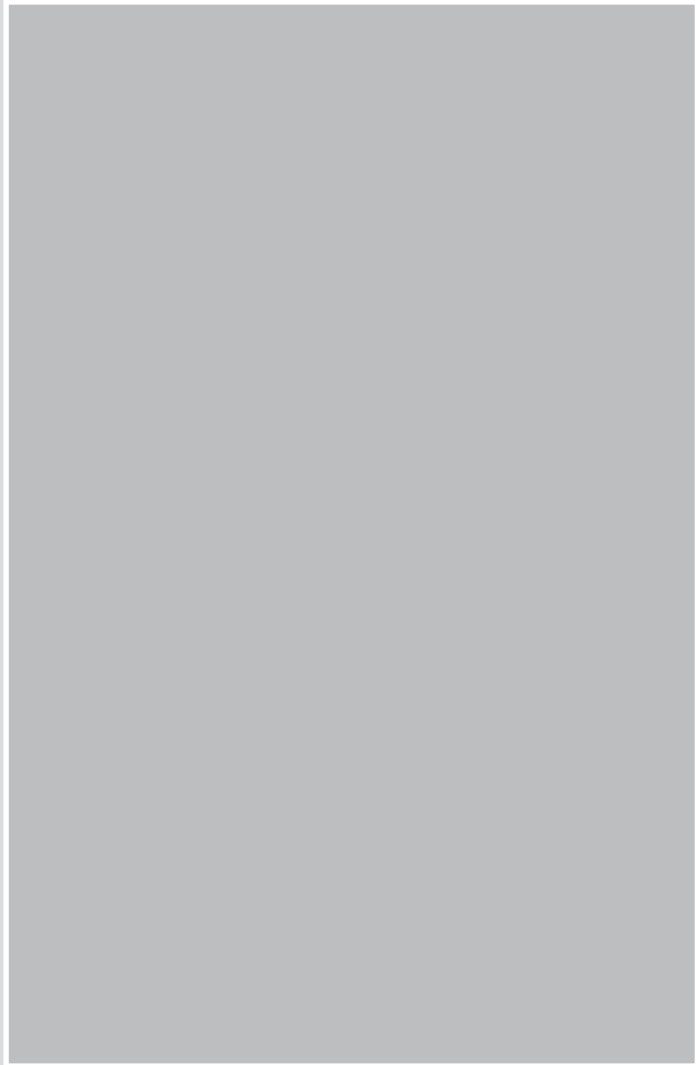
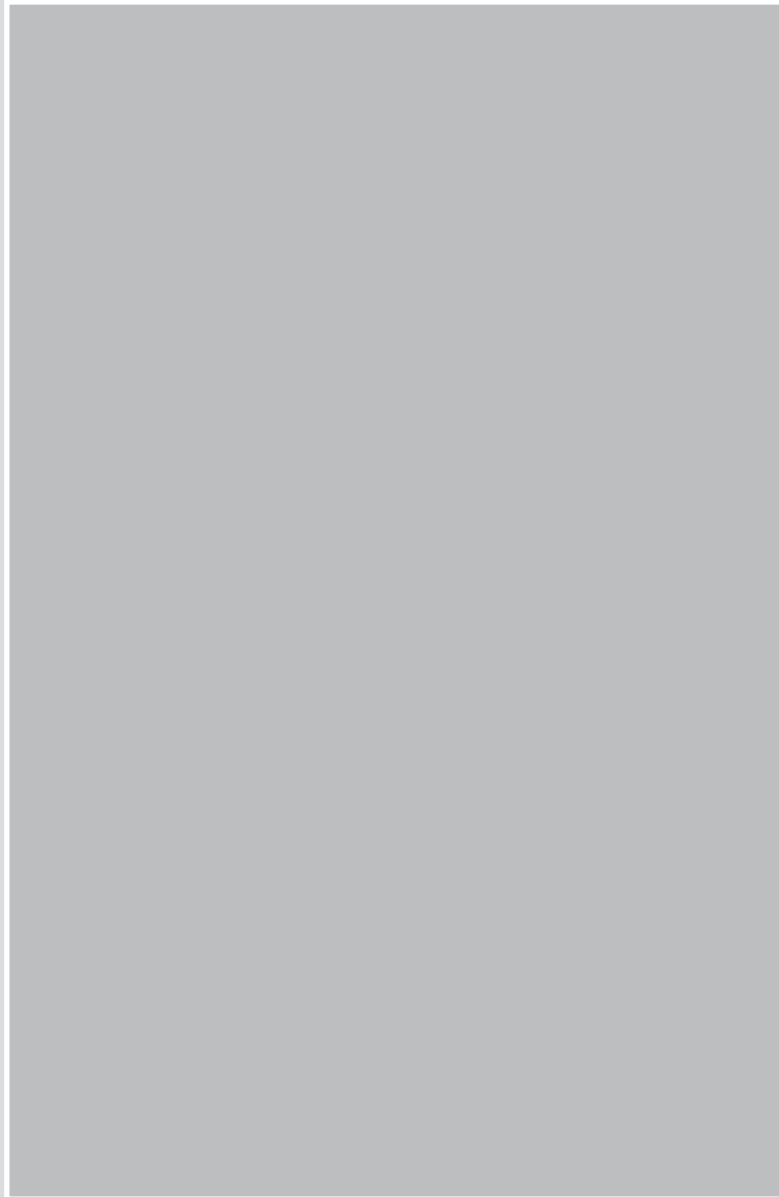


The mosque complex has a large unique cylindrical minaret made from plastered coral stone and tied with metal bands. The iconography showcases heavy influences from the Indian subcontinent, Swahili Africa, Arabia, and the Malay Archipelago.

BAGAN

Following the successful conservation initiatives at Ananda Temple, the restoration of earthquake-damaged pagodas is the current key project of the MEA at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bagan in neighbouring Myanmar





West side multi-tiered roof of the Ananda Temple before and after chemical conservation

during the State visit of the President and First Lady of Myanmar to India in February 2020, the Myanmar side welcomed the commencement of the first phase of work by the Archaeological Survey of India

in restoring 12 earthquake-damaged pagodas. India, on the other hand, congratulated its neighbour on the inclusion of Bagan in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. In July 2019, nearly 25 years after the magnificent complex of Buddhist temples was first nominated for listing, UNESCO finally inscribed Myanmar's ancient capital as a World Heritage Site.

Of the thousands of pagodas that dot the landscape of Bagan and the many that were damaged in the earthquake, India has identified 92 pagodas to be repaired and restored over several phases. In the first phase of this latest restoration initiative of India in Myanmar, the ASI has earmarked 12 pagodas to be renovated.

Sharing close cultural ties and a sense of deep kinship given India's Buddhist heritage, India had undertaken other key conservation initiatives also, especially in Bagan. In July 2010, an MoU was signed in Delhi for the restoration of Ananda Temple, a masterpiece of Mon architecture and one of the most revered places of worship in Bagan. The ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, was the implementing agency. The project was completed in June 2018, with necessary assistance from the Government of Myanmar. During the renovation, the Prime Minister of India had also paid respects at Ananda Temple on his visit to Myanmar in September 2017.

One of the most recognizable landmarks of Myanmar and its richest architectural and cultural heritage, Bagan is an ancient city on the banks of the Irrawaddy River in Mandalay region. From 1044 to 1297, it served as the capital of the Pagan Kingdom, the first Burmese kingdom formed by King Anawrahta. It features an exceptional array of Buddhist art and architecture, demon-

strating centuries of cultural traditions of Theravada Buddhism as well as dramatic evidence of the Bagan Period, from the 11th through the 13th centuries.

The 12th century in particular is remembered as the Golden Age of Burmese Temple Building, which earned Bagan the nickname of 'Land of a Thousand Pagodas.' By the end of the 13th century, more than 4,000 religious structures including numerous temples, pagodas, monasteries and others, had been built in and around Bagan. Many were damaged and destroyed by earthquakes and other natural disasters as well as pillaging armies, yet over 3,000 such monuments remain standing in various conditions, even today.

The temples of Bagan are unique among South-east Asian architectural styles. They are characterized by central, square structures built around shrines, with interior passages supported by vaulted arches radiating outward and creating the shape of a cross. Kiln-fired brick and stucco make up the interior of the temples. Archaeologists, now know that the bricks were made outside of Bagan and shipped in via the Irrawaddy River, because each brick carries a stamp of the village in which it was made. The outer structure of the temples' high, pointed towers are meant to reflect the shape of Mt. Meru, the mythical home of the Hindu gods, which is also held sacred by Buddhists as the centre of the world.

The other major architectural form prevalent in Bagan is the pagoda or stupa which is bell-shaped and often, a solid brick structure, set on a square or octagonal base. It usually rises to a gently tapering peak of gilded metal and a jeweled finial, topped with a sacred parasol-shaped decoration called the hti. Made of fine brickwork, the pagodas are often covered in stucco and adorned with fine carvings. The remarkable number of surviving stupas, temples and monasteries are supported by continuing religious traditions and activities which make Bagan exceptional.

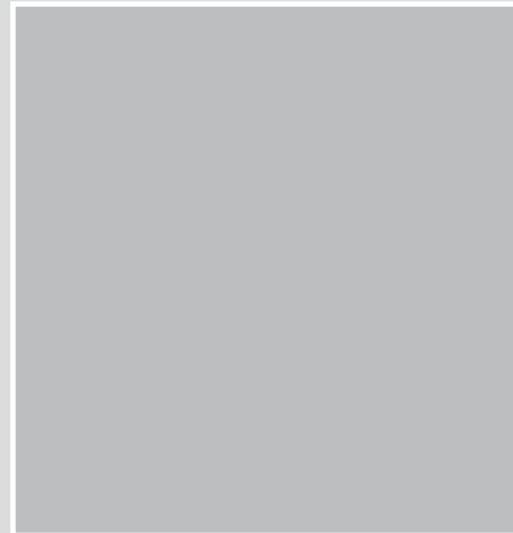
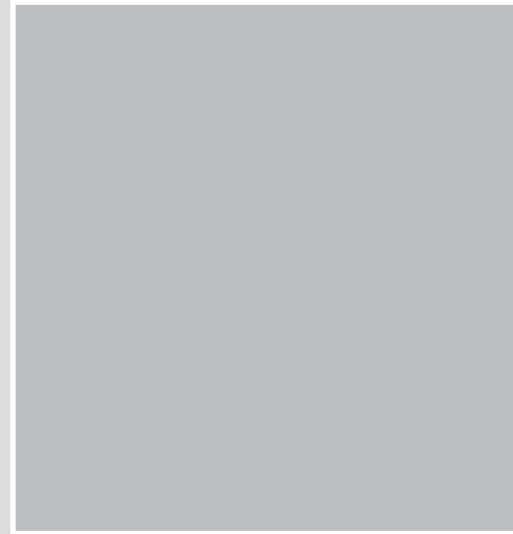
Besides containing an extraordinary ensemble of Buddhist monumental architecture, reflecting the strength of religious devotion of an early major Buddhist

empire, Bagan is also a complex, layered cultural landscape that incorporates living communities and contemporary urban areas. Within the context of the rich expressions and traditions of Buddhist architecture and art found throughout Asia, Bagan is distinctive and outstanding. According to the UNESCO, the Outstanding Universal Value of Bagan lies in its landscape, archaeological sites, monuments, inscriptions, sculptures, murals, cloth paintings as well as the continuing intangible heritage and cultural practices.

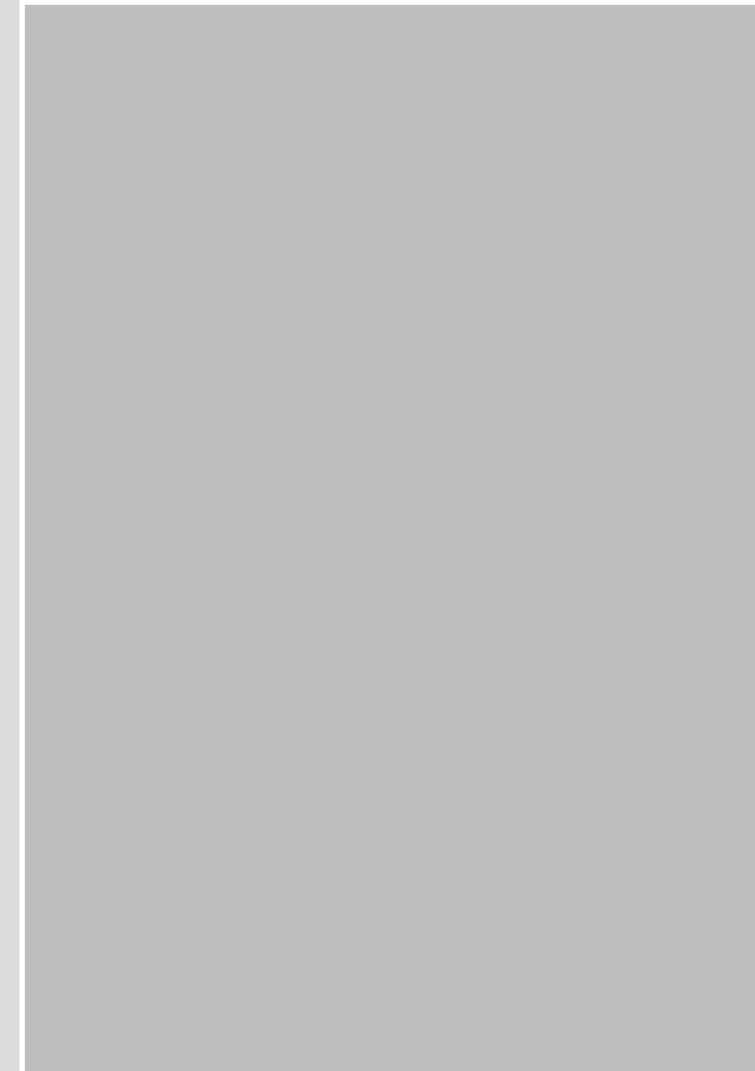
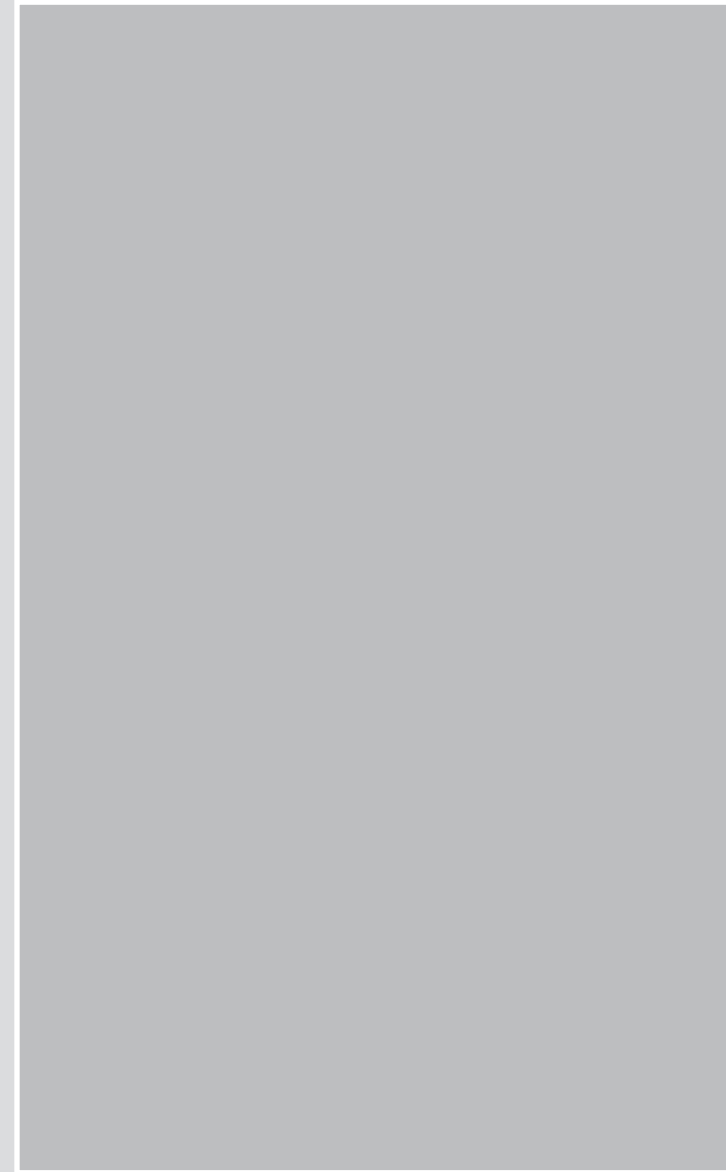
Management, protection and preservation of the architectural and cultural heritage of Bagan are implemented by the Department of Archaeology and National Museum (DANM). The Bagan National Coordinating Committee (BAGANCOM) has been established by the national government as the decision-making body for Bagan. Heritage zoning plans have been established and guidelines developed to support the most pressing activities of tourism and development management, environmental pressures and natural disasters. As such, India's help in conservation work, first with Ananda Temple and now with the earthquake-damaged pagodas, has been greatly appreciated.

It may not be as famous as Angkor Wat yet, but Bagan has been attracting its own share of tourism over the years, which has grown ever since its World Heritage tag. Viewing the temples in different ways is very popular here, whether it's taking a walk through the landscape, visiting the monasteries and temples that display ornate murals, or getting a bird's eye view from a hot air balloon at dawn. A horse-drawn carriage ride through the temple areas at dusk is a beautiful experience. So is climbing the top terraces of the Shwesandaw Paya or the 'Sunset Pagoda' to enjoy sprawling panoramas of the ancient city at sunset.

The conservation work done by India at the Ananda Temple has thus added on to the travel experience by restoring one of the most magnificent monuments in Bagan to its former glory. With the earthquake-damaged pagodas too, the repair and conservation work will go a long way in bringing back the past beauty, making it a destination worth visiting.



Shew Chan Tha Phaya before and after chemical conservation



North side porch of the Ananda Temple, Myanmar, before and after chemical conservation

ANANDA TEMPLE

Following the successful conservation initiatives at Ananda Temple, the restoration of earthquake-damaged pagodas is the current key project of the MEA at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bagan in neighbouring Myanmar



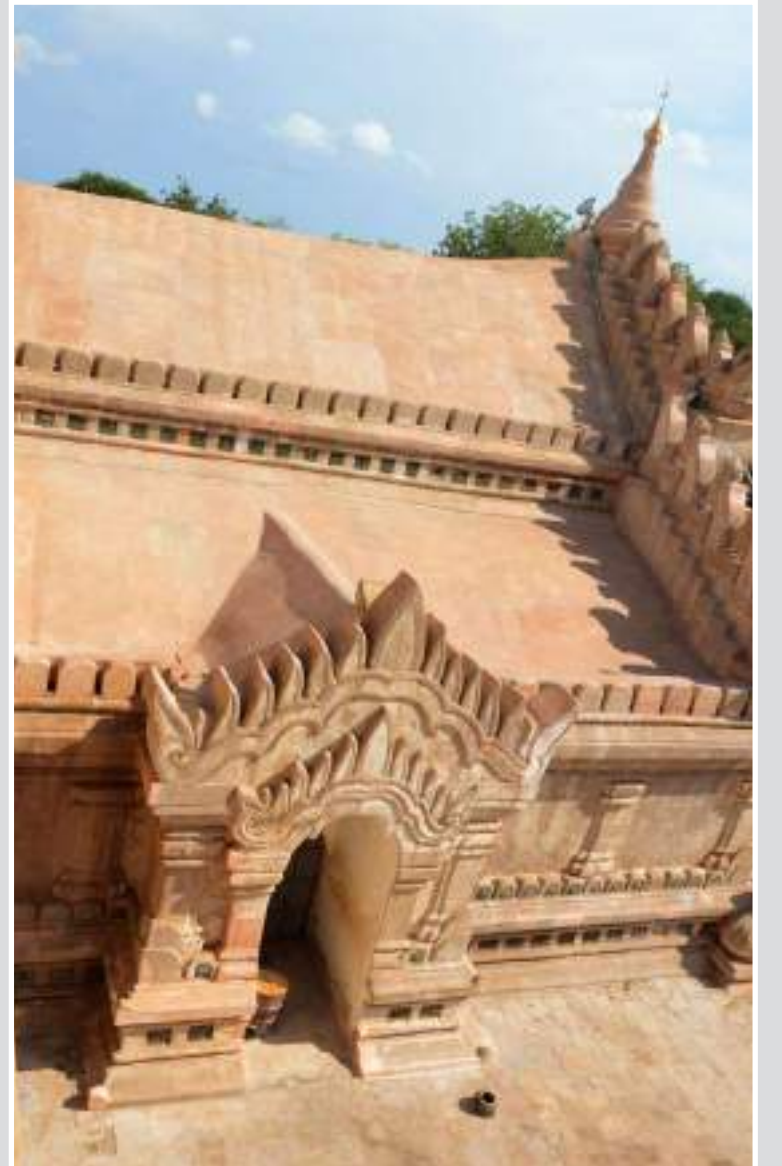


West side multi-tiered roof of the Ananda Temple before and after chemical treatment





North side porch of the Ananda Temple, Myanmar, before and after chemical treatment





NATIONAL HERITAGE SITES



BANGLADESH

To cement the shared history and common heritage between the two neighbours, India has undertaken many renovation and development projects in the cultural space of Bangladesh over the years



>>
This page: (Clockwise from above): Navaratna Temple architecture of the 17th Century Sirajganj Bangladesh; 300-year old temple of modern architect in Bangladesh; Carved terracotta details of a scene from the Ramayana in a beautiful ancient temple in Puthia, Rajshahi district, Bangladesh; Carved terracotta scene of war elephant on beautiful ancient Govinda temple in Puthia religious complex, Rajshahi district, Bangladesh

The year 2021 was momentous for India and Bangladesh as they jointly celebrated their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. There is much that unites the two neighbours, be it their shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, or passion for music, literature and the arts. This commonality is reflected in the multi-dimensional and expanding relations between the two nations in various spheres, including several heritage projects taken up by India in Bangladesh through the years. The latest in this endeavour is the reconstruction of the 300-year-old Sree Sree Joy Kali Matar Temple, in Bangladesh's northern Natore district. Beginning in July 2020, the project is being undertaken with Indian grant. India is also funding the construction of a Ramakrishna Temple and restoration of the Sree Sree Anandomoyee Kali Mata Mandir in the country.

In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi visited Noakhali, a town in the Chittagong Division of Bangladesh, in an effort to bring peace to the communal violence-stricken area. The Gandhi Ashram Trust was thus founded here with the donations of Barrister Hemanta Ghosh. In 1975, with the promulgation of Gandhi Ashram Trust ordinance by the Government of Bangladesh, the present trust came into being as a philanthropic and development-oriented organisation, rooted in the Peace Mission of the Mahatma. Working mainly for the rural poor and women, its work positively impacts over 1.2 million families. Under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, a project was taken up for the upgradation of the Gandhi Memorial Museum, development of the Gandhi Memorial Institute, and construction of a residence for the Secretary of the Trust.

Housed in a 100-year-old building, the museum was in a dilapidated state, as was the school that was inaugurated in 1947 by Mahatma Gandhi, with no infrastructure for library, research, official activities and training. An MoU for executing this renovation project was



signed on December 7, 2014 between the Gandhi Ashram Trust of Noakhali and the High Commission of India in Dhaka. The upgraded school was inaugurated in September 2016 as the Gandhi Memorial Institute, while the work related to the museum is near completion. The renovation work has allowed the Gandhi Ashram to solidify its presence in the area and keep alive the memory of Gandhi's visit to fight communalism in the area.

Located in Shilaidaha in Kushtia district of Bangladesh, Rabindranath Tagore's Kuthibari or family estate is known to have inspired many a poem and story with its idyllic setting. The house was built by his father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, and many of his songs that became part of his seminal work, Geetanjali were written here. The preeminent place that Tagore holds in Bangla literature and the motional chord that connects Bangladeshis to him continues to define the social, secular and cultural fabric of the country. The stream of visitors that Kuthibari has always received was testament to this fact, and its organic growth as a cultural landmark led to demands for its further development.

Rabindra Bhawan was thus envisaged as a comprehensive complex consisting of a state-of-the-art exhibition gallery, library, multimedia conference room, projection facilities and amphitheatre. The exhibition gallery is meant to showcase his legacy, while the library will provide access to his literary works. Music rooms where lessons on Rabindra Sangeet will be imparted are also part of the complex. The project was first announced by the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee on his visit to Bangladesh in March 2013. The foundation stone was unveiled on June 7, 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

during his State visit. A financial agreement for the extended development work was then signed on March 9, 2017 between the governments of India and Bangladesh. While the project is still underway and likely to be completed soon, the two-storey building that serves as the museum has already been opened for visitors, with the master's arts and works exhibited in 16 rooms.

A Brahmo Samaj missionary whose contribution to Bangla literature is a common heritage of both Bangladesh and India, Girish Chandra Sen hailed from the Narsingdi district of Bangladesh. His parental house in the village of Panchdona in Narsingdi was in a dilapidated state, with the crumbling two-storied building precariously standing as the last remaining connection of the renowned scholar to the place. Keeping the memory of this stalwart figure alive in Narsingdi was important to help entrench his secular ethos to the place. Oitihya Onneswan, or the Archaeological Research Centre, a local trust in Dhaka, approached the High Commission of India with a proposal to conserve Sen's residence in Panchdona and covert it to a museum. Subsequently, an MoU was signed in January 2015 for the project.

Completed in March 2017 and opened to the public a month later, the conservation efforts have since made Sen's residence into a landmark tourist attraction. The museum, which receives around 400-500 visitors per month, showcases his literary works and various items used by him. It has also become a learning centre through which visitors can delve deep into his life's work and legacy. The local populace takes justified pride in the museum and the scholar who hails from the district.



Above: Panoramic view of the Ahsan Manzil - Mughal Palace in Dhaka;
Below: At the entrance of the Buddha Temple is a giant Buddha gold statue at Balaghata, Bandarban, Bangladesh



>>

Clockwise from top left: The Baitul Aman Jame Masjid Complex, commonly known as Guthia Mosque of Barisal; Beautiful Satgaon tea daughter monument and tea estate; Main Structure Of Lalbag Kella, a historical place in Dhaka city, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Theatre is an important part of Bangladesh's culture and continues to be a popular form of expression and entertainment. The port city of Chittagong on the southeastern coast of Bangladesh has an active community that loves going to the theatre or taking part in plays. To cater to this potential, the Chittagong City Corporation established the Theatre Institute of Chittagong (TIC) in 2004, which soon became a hub of cultural activities, performances, workshops and skill development in related professions. With a growing number of activities, TIC sought to renovate its auditorium and add state-of-the-art equipment.

The project was undertaken with financial support from the Government of India. Major works included replacement of the audience chairs, sound system and stage lighting equipment; installation of air conditioners, additional lift and CCTV cameras; replacement of tiles and paint; and civil works like repairing of stage and backstage. With the renovated complex inaugurated in February 2019, drama festivals, cultural workshops, training events, exhibitions of film, photo and art, and other activities have become a regular feature. As an active part of the cultural space of Chittagong, TIC continues to transform and define the ecosystem. It also hosts events conducted by the Assistant High Commission of India in Chittagong, and has hence, become a symbol of friendship between the two Countries.

The oldest university of Bangladesh, Dhaka University celebrated its centenary year in 2021. The university began courses in Music as early as 1993, with Honours and Masters courses as well as MPhil and PhD degrees in classical music, folk music, Rabindra Sangeet and Nazrul Sangeet. These courses and the continuing education in music and dance,

help keep alive the cultural richness of the region, the distinctiveness of which led to the creation of Bangladesh. However, the Music Department at Dhaka University crystallised to its current form only in 2009, even though there was no modern recording studio available to the 200 odd students who study here. The project of establishing such a studio was undertaken by the High Commission of India in Dhaka.

As part of the project, an identified hall in the University was equipped with state-of-the-art mixer, recording panel, Midi keyboard, speakers and other equipment. Acoustic work and soundproofing of the hall was done to convert it to a full-scale recording studio. The project was executed in 2014 and inaugurated by PM Modi on June 7, 2015. The recording studio has helped the music department give practical lessons to its students in music recording and associated technology, which is especially useful for the final-year students to learn the ropes of studio and sound management. The studio facilities are also used by students for their professional recordings.

Unbeknown to many, Bangladesh is home to an ethnic Manipuri community whose connect with Manipuri culture and traditions continue to this day. Residing mainly in the Sylhet region, the members of the community speak chaste Manipuri and have preserved the original forms of Manipuri dance, Thangta or sword martial art, and other traditional arts and handicrafts. Although a small community, their cultural impact is high as seen in the popularity of Manipuri dance in Bangladesh. But while there is a cultural vibrancy within the community, a need was felt for an institutionalised effort to protect and preserve its heritage. The idea



of establishing a Manipuri Cultural Complex which was conceived in Kamalgonj Upazilla of Moulvibazar district, to serve as the centre of socio-economic and cultural activity for the community. The Government of India took on this ambitious project.

The cultural complex was envisaged to include a Culture & Training Center, Weaving Development & Training Center, an ICT Wing, conference hall, museum, library and guest house. Apart from providing training in the performance arts, the community hoped to use the complex to impart effective training on modern techniques and market-oriented designs for their handloom products. With further funding from the Government of India, the complex was furnished with requisite furniture, training material, musical instruments, etc. The complex was completed in November 2014 and inaugurated in January 2015.

Since then, the Cultural and Training centre in the complex has become a training hub for Manipuri dance as well as for traditional weaving techniques of handloom products. The ICT centre empowers Manipuri students by providing them easy connectivity and access to technology. Various social and cultural activities like observation of Manipuri New Year, Raas festival and more are conducted regularly in the complex. The economic and educational activities pursued at the centre continue to enhance the entrepreneurial skills of the community members, while the cultural complex and its activities instil a sense of pride in the community as a whole.

With its deep interest in traditional dance and theatre, the Manipuri community in Sylhet also felt the need for a platform or theatre space where they could train, practice

and perform their much-loved artforms. The Notomondop was thus proposed to be constructed in Ghoramara, Moulvibazar with the aim to popularise the community's performing arts. Government of India supported the project with financial assistance, and it was completed and inaugurated in April 2019. With a capacity to accommodate nearly 200 persons at a time, the Notomondop has been conducting regular ticketed shows as well as drama festivals. The presence of the theatre has had a positive impact on the youth, with more of them taking an interest in participating in their community's traditional art forms. This is helping them preserve and nurture the inherent cultural vibrancy of the community for generations to come.



« Clockwise from top left: View of Shashi Lodge, an architectural symbol of Mymensingh region in Bangladesh; Vinno Jogot Central Jame Mosque at Rangpur in Bangladesh; The Sixty Dome Mosque or Shaa Gombuj Moshjid also known as Shait Gambuj Mosque or Saith Gunbad Masjid, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Bagerhat.



BHUTAN

Numerous restoration, conservation and construction works funded by India in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is strengthening the long history of cultural bond that the two neighbours share like nowhere else in the world



>>
(Left and right:
Shakyamuni Buddha
painting before and after
restoration)

f

or much of the world, the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan may perhaps be one of the remotest places to visit. For India however, it is one of our closest neighbours with a long and shared history of glorious cultural and religious traditions, particularly of Buddhism. Vibrant people-to-people ties are a hallmark of the warm and friendly relations between the two nations. The latest gesture towards strengthening these ties has come from India in the form of a bronze statue of Lord Buddha, commissioned by ICCR and gifted to the Government and people of Bhutan. According to the MEA's 2021-22 Annual Report, the statue was enshrined at the prestigious Tashichho Dzong monastery on June 20, 2021, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Guru Rinpoche. The cultural linkages have also been kept alive and further deepened through numerous bilateral cooperation over the years, including several restoration and conservation projects undertaken by India at various revered religious sites around Bhutan. A total of 17 such projects have already seen completion, while another seven are in the works currently and are expected to be completed in the next couple of years.

The first of such cultural and heritage projects in Bhutan that was undertaken and funded by the Government of India was the renovation of Simtokha Dzong, the oldest monastery in the Himalayan kingdom. Portraying the concept of a 'castle monastery', it was the first ever Dzong built in the country, way back in 1629 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the founder of Bhutan. Strategically located on a prominent ridge in the Thimphu Valley, it is believed to protect Thimphu and the adjoining valleys leading to the Dochu La pass and eastern Bhutan. Today, this important historical monument and former Buddhist monastery houses one of the premier Dzongkha language learning institutes. As part of its Project Tied Assistance to the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) under its 9th FYP,

Government of India (GoI) extended financial assistance for the renovation of the Dzong. With GoI's funding, the renovation works began in December 2002 and were completed in May 2008. The works included, inter alia, reopening of the original entrance just below Zhabdrung's room, restoration of roofs to their original shape, and remodeling of the Dratshang.

Located within the ancient Ta-dzong building in Paro, the National Museum of Bhutan was created to house some of the finest specimens of Bhutanese art, including masterpieces of bronze statues and paintings. It was established in 1968 under the command of His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, the third hereditary Monarch of the Kingdom. Today, the National Museum has in its possession over 3,000 works of Bhutanese art, covering more than 1,500 years of Bhutan's cultural heritage. Although it features suitable galleries to house and display the extensive collections, an exhibition-cum-administrative hall was further constructed in 2006 with India's assistance as part of its 9th Five Year Plan (FYP). Completed in 2008, a parking lot and office of the Director of the museum were also constructed during this phase with the funding.

Weaving is an integral part of the culture of Bhutan. With the aim to preserve and promote this living art, the Royal Textile Academy (RTA) of Bhutan was instituted in May 2005, under the patronage of Queen Mother Sangay Choden Wangchuk. It houses a substantial collection of textile and other artefacts exclusive to Bhutan, including Namzas or dresses and accessories worn by the Royal Family. The significance of Bhutan's textiles is attributed to its intricate patterns in textile art that are unique in the world, skills and methods adopted, and the glyphs and symbols of ancient knowledge incorporated for religious and social events. It was imperative that such rich textile traditions be not only conserved but also studied and taught further. A weaving and conservation centre was thus set up with financial assistance extended by the GoI to the RGoB in



October 2008, during the 10th FYP. Besides showcasing unique Bhutanese textiles, the centre also trains locals in the traditional arts of weaving and yarn dyeing. Since becoming operational in July 2011, the RTA has trained over 350 locals through various programmes at the centre. It has also become a tourist attraction with as many as 18-20,000 people visiting every year.

One of the most magnificent Buddhist monastery and fortress in Bhutan, the Rinpung Dzong in Paro District was reconsecrated in 1644 at the site of the previous five-storied Hungrel Dzong. During the 17th and 18th centuries, it was an important bastion for the Kingdom of Bhutan and protected Paro against invasions from Tibet on many occasions. More popularly known as Paro Dzong today, it serves as the administrative and monastic centre of the western region, and is included in Bhutan's tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage inclusion. In December 2009, renovation work of the Dzong was started with financial assistance extended by India to Bhutan in the 10th FYP. The works mainly included rehabilitation of the surroundings and opening of the traditional front door of the Dzong.

Located in the town of Tashigang in eastern Bhutan, the Trashigang Dzong is one of the largest dzong fortresses in the country, prophesied by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the founder and unifier of Bhutan. Built in 1659 to defend against Tibetan invasions, it played an important role in the unification of Eastern Bhutan. However, the Dzong suffered major damages in the earthquake of September 2009, and was yet again weakened by strong tremors in September 2011. Subsequently, in August 2012, Gol funded

preparatory works for the Trashigang Dzong Renovation Project in the 10th FYP. These included topographical survey, preparation of master plan, and procurement of equipment and materials. The preparatory works were concluded in June 2013 and a month later, conservation works on Trashigang Dzong began with further fundings from India under the 11th FYP. It included consolidation and modification of the main structure, as well as construction of new ancillary structures. With the completion of the project in June 2018, the Dzong has been restored to its former glory.

The headquarters and home of the monastic body of Dagana District in southern Bhutan, the Daga Dzong (formerly known as Daga Trashiyangtse Dzong and shortened as Dagana Dzong) is one of the oldest castle-dzongs in the country. It was built in 1651 by Drugda Namgyal under the command of Zhabdrung. Among other sacred relics, the Dzong also houses a buffalo horn measuring about 4'5", believed to have been discovered in the early 16th century. In March 2010, major renovation works on the Dzong commenced with funding from the Gol under its Project Tied Assistance with RGoB in the 10th FYP. Methodical renovation of the Dzong was carried out, including removal of rotten timber and roofing material. Besides that, a Drashag or monks' hostel was also constructed that can accommodate about 100 monks. Earlier, due to space constraints, many of the monks were living in the Shedras or temples of Dagana. Both the projects were completed in June 2013.

In June 2016, Government of India funded the construction of the one-of-its-kind National Conservation Laboratory in the 10th and 11th FYP. The project is



<<

Above: Traditional temple artwork in Bhutan before and after restoration
Below: Bhutanese painting before and after restoration



»
Above: Endangered temple art before and after restoration;
Below: A temple artwork before and after restoration and chemical treatment

located near important landmarks in Thimphu, such as the Royal Textile Academy and the Nehru-Wangchuk Cultural Centre. Conceived as a research institute, the Laboratory currently houses the Department of Culture of the Royal Government of Bhutan and provides space to their staff to work on conservation projects of heritage buildings and movable cultural properties.

Hidden in the untouched natural beauty of Gasa District in northwestern Bhutan, the Gasa Dzong or Gasa Tashi Tongmon Dzong is the administrative centre of the district. It was built in the 17th century by the second Druk Desi, Tenzin Drukdra, over the site of a meditation place established by Drubthob Terkungpa in the 13th century. It was meant as a bulwark against attacks from the north and later expanded by the fourth Druk Desi. A part of the Dzong consisting of the Ka-gyed Lhakhang and District Administrative Office was destroyed in a fire in January 2008. While some parts were immediately repaired, the remaining structures of the Dzong required urgent attention and intensive repair. India extended financial assistance to Bhutan in the 11th FYP for the restoration works on Gasa Dzong as well as construction of additional facilities for monks. The project was undertaken from March 2014 to June 2018.

Until the advent of Western-styled modern education in the late 1950s, monasteries were the only centres of learning in Bhutan. Monastic education is thus the oldest form of formal education system in the Kingdom. It is governed and regulated by the central monastic body called Zhung Dratshang, along with the Commission for the Monastic Affairs of Bhutan. The pre-primary to class VIII level equivalent of monastic education is imparted in centralised monastic schools called Zhirim Lobdra Tewa. Since the Dratshangs in Sarpang and Gelephu were small and overcrowded, the need for additional monastic education institutions was felt. Government of India came to the rescue and offered a financial assistance as part of its 11th FYP in

February 2014. With the grant, the Royal Government of Bhutan constructed two new Zhirim Lobdra Tewa by June 2018 in Dorokha, a village block in the Samtse District, and Dekiling, a village block in Sarpang District.

One of the newest dzongs in the Himalayan kingdom, Pemagatshel Dzong is envisioned as an iconic symbol of Bhutanese culture and society that will bind the eastern district of Pemagatshel within the larger Bhutanese nation. The district is one of the few Dzongkhags that does not feature a historic Dzong. Conceptualised with Indian funding, sanctioned under the 9th –12th FYPs, construction of the new dzong began in July 2010 and is expected to be completed soon. Upon completion, it'll serve as the Office for Dzongkhag Administration and Seat of the Monastic Body. The Dzong will be a harmonious blend of traditional Bhutanese architecture and modern, state-of-the-art technology. It'll also be the most prominent structure in the Denchi new town, where it is located.

Located in the central part of southern Bhutan, Sarpang is one of the three gateways to Bhutan from India and is thus strategically important for both countries. It is also one of the other Dzongkhags that doesn't feature a historic Dzong. A new Dzong was thus commissioned in July 2014 with financial assistance from India. Construction work began in January 2018 and is expected to be completed by July 2023. The new Dzong will house the centre of the local administration of Sarpang District as well as the district's Monk Body. Like its contemporary in Pemagatshel, this too shall seamlessly blend traditional Bhutanese architecture with state-of-the-art technology and modern amenities.

Legend has it that when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal was at the Chimi Lhakhang monastery in Punakha, an old cripple approached him and said that if he built a dzong in Wangdue Phodrang on a ridge that resembled a sleeping elephant, he would unite the country. Zhabdrung assumed that the old man was



Yeshey Goenpo (Mahakala) himself, and sent a noble to study the location. The noble reported that he saw four ravens circling the ridge, which then flew away in four different directions. Taking this to be a divine prophecy, Zhabdrung constructed the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong in 1638. Centuries later, in June 2012, a tragic fire would raze down the structure. While renovation of the Dzong was already being funded by the GoI as part of its 10th FYP, post the fire the reconstruction of the Dzong was also taken up afresh by India in the 11th FYP.

Located high on the top of a hill in Upper Paro Valley, the Sangchhen Choekor Monastery is a Buddhist college and home to about 150 monks, who study here for six years before moving on to Tango Monastery upon graduation. It was established in 1765 by Chogley Shacha Tenzin and is one of the four Buddhist Universities in Bhutan, thus holding an important place in the religious and cultural realms of the country. The monastery sustained severe damages due to earthquakes in 2009 and 2011. The Government of India is providing financial support in its 12th FYP for the restoration of the structure. The works that started in November 2019 mainly include consolidation of overall structure, repair of walls, replacement of rotten timber, and construction of a Drasha complex for the monks. The conservation project is expected to be completed by June 2023.

The 'Dzong of Victorious Region', Lingzhi Yugyel Dzong is one of the last frontier Dzongs bordering Tibet.

Situated at an altitude of 4,150 metres in Lingzhi, Thimphu District, the important monastery and administrative centre is home to about 30 resident monks headed by a Lama Neten, head of a district monastic body. The Dzong was constructed during the reign of the third Druk Desi Minjur Tenpa from 1667-1680, to defend the country's border against Tibet. It suffered severe damage in the earthquake of September 2011 and has been currently left vacant, with the structures requiring proper consolidation work. The Government of India extended financial assistance to Royal Government of Bhutan in its 12th FYP for the renovation works of the Dzong. The conservation project which began in March 2019 is expected to be completed by June 2023.

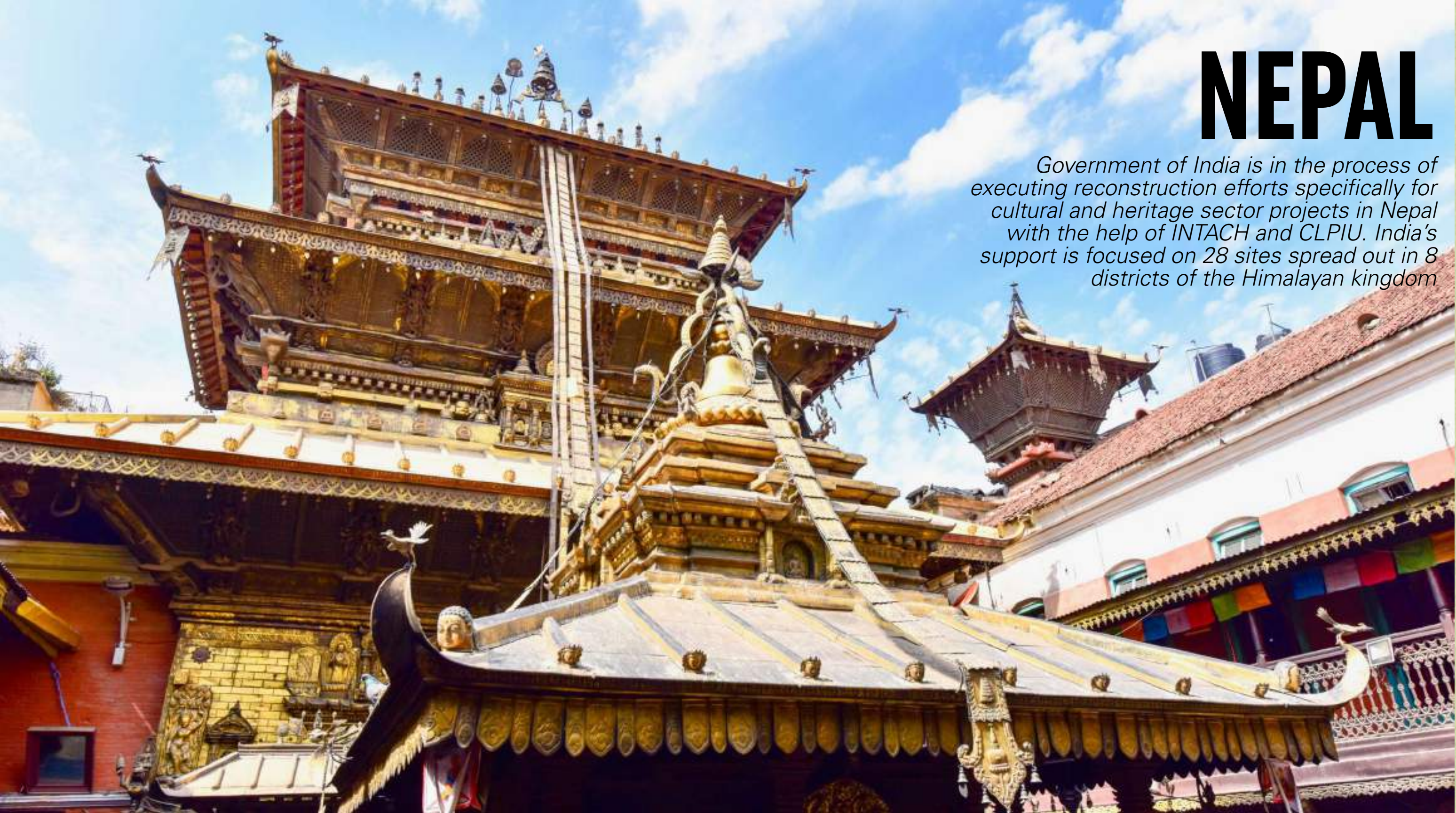
In Bhutan, it is believed that if you cannot go to Tibet for pilgrimage, then visiting the Rigsum Goenpa is an alternative of the same merit. Located in Trashiyangste Dzongkhag, the 18th century gumpa was built by Lama Tshering Gyamtsho and further extended by his nephews in later years. One of them brought the Jowo Shakya Muni statue, a replica of the one in Tibet, from Punakha Dzong and placed it here. The gumpa was rebuilt in 2004 and now has a traditional religious school as well. With the passage of time, Rigsum Goenpa had been enervated and had to be repaired through and through to its former glory. As part of its 12th FYP, India is funding the restoration works, beginning in November 2019 and expected to be completed by June 2023.



>>
Above: A Bhutanese piece of artwork before and after restoration;
Right: Temple wall art before and after chemical treatment

NEPAL

Government of India is in the process of executing reconstruction efforts specifically for cultural and heritage sector projects in Nepal with the help of INTACH and CLPIU. India's support is focused on 28 sites spread out in 8 districts of the Himalayan kingdom



responding to the devastating earthquakes of 25th April, 2015 and 12 May 2015 that caused huge damage to the infrastructure and heritage buildings in Nepal, India committed US\$ 1 billion towards reconstruction efforts, with US\$ 50 million earmarked specifically for cultural and heritage sector projects. India's support in this sector is focused on 28 sites spread out in 8 districts of Nepal.

For sites in the Kathmandu Valley, India through INTACH is providing the technical expertise for drawing up detailed restoration plans for 12 sites.

Located in Kathmandu, the thousand year old Seto Machindranath Temple is a living heritage of the valley and is a monument of national importance in Nepal. The pagoda style temple is built with bricks in mud mortar and carved timber work has a roof covered with gilded metal and metal banners. Its surrounding courtyard of paved stone has numerous small chaityas and stone pillars supporting Buddhist deities. It suffered damages in the 2015 earthquake resulting in water penetration through the roof, ground settlement, structural cracks which has accelerated its dilapidation process.

India's conservation efforts are targeted at documenting the exquisite decorative art surfaces and features such as repousse work, decorative and non-decorative woodworks and retrofitting of the heritage structure using timber seismic elements. The aim is to preserve the living temple through minimal interventions based on local traditions and values.

Nearby is the Nepal Bhasha Parishad, originally the ancestral residence of eminent Nepali poet Kavi Kesari Chittadhar 'Hridaya' who contributed towards preserving Newari language and culture. The 2015 earthquake caused severe structural cracks to the four-storied 150-year old Newari building. Apart from conservation, India's efforts would also be aimed at modernising and upgrading the existing museum and provide training and capacity building of the caretakers to document, assess the state of conservation develop conservation and maintenance programmes.

In Lalitpur, India is working on 7 sites around the Patan Durbar UNESCO World Heritage Site. These include the pre-10th century



Facing page: Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra attending the ground breaking ceremony at the Seto Machindranath Temple site in Nepal.

This page (Clockwise from above): Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi unveiled a model of the proposed structure of the Buddhist Centre in Lumbini; PM Modi in a bilateral meeting with the PM of Nepal Shri Sher Bahadur Deuba; PM Modi visits the Mayadevi temple in Lumbini, Nepal.





<<

Above: The Kumari Chhen in the premises of Ratnakar Mahavihar in Kathmandu Valley; The Mahavihar is renowned for its association with the living goddess 'Kumari' of Patan whose official residence or the Chhen is located in its rear courtyard; Below: Jestha Varna Mahavihara, also known as Jyaba Bahi is 300 metres away from the Patan Durbar square world heritage site.



>>

Above and below: Entrance to the Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, through the Eastern wing; Known as Kwa Baha, the Mahavihar is situated in the buffer zone of Patan Durbar Square; Right: Gopichandra Mahavihara (Pintu Bahi) is located to the north of Patan Durbar Square in Lalitpur, Kathmandu Valley.

Gusthal Mahavihara and Agam of Prathamashri Mahaviharas; the 11th century Hiranya Varna Mahavihar popularly known as the Golden temple or Kwa Baha; the 12th century Gopichandra Mahavihara or the Pintu Bahi; the Shree Napichandra Mahavihara or the Duntu Bahi; and the 17th century Jestha Varna Mahavihara.

All interventions to these historic mahaviharas are aimed at restoring the authenticity by following the traditional form, patterns and layout of the typical bahi architecture of this region, while ensuring the seismic safety and enhancing the seismic resistance of the buildings. Surviving material heritage like decorative art surfaces and features such as historical timber works, stone sculptures are being documented prior to actual conservation and restoration works. In many projects, interventions include the upgradation of building services including illumination, sanitation and rain water harvesting provisions.

Also included amongst the projects in this region is the Kumari Chhen building, a traditional three storey mud-mortar Newari style dwelling unit constructed with locally available materials is renowned for its association with the living goddess 'Kumari' of Patan whose official residence or the Chhen is located in its rear courtyard where important rituals associated with the living goddess Kumari are observed. Here,





«
Napichandra Mahavihara popularly known as Duntu Bahi is located to the north of Patan Durbar Square, UNESCO World Heritage zone of the Kathmandu Valley. The original shrine building suffered extensive damage after the 1934 earthquake and was rebuilt in 1980's.

Indian efforts are focussed on the partial reconstruction of the Kumari Chhen and conservation of the wall painting in it so that it can continue to serve as the ritual building; simultaneously, India is also constructing a new building or the Niwas to function as the new official residence of the Kumari goddess.

The Adalat Bhawan, also known as the Old Court and situated in the core of Patan Durbar Square World Heritage Zone is another project site. A brick in mud masonry structure amalgamating Colonial and Newari style of architecture with thick load bearing walls, the Adalat suffered major structural damages after the 2015 earthquake. The poor earthquake resistant behaviour of mud masonry structure is being retrofitted and restored

as per Nepal's Ancient Monument Preservation Act, 2013 (1956) with Indian expertise.

Elsewhere in Bhaktapur, India is working on conservation efforts on buildings in the Jangam Math complex. The Jangam is a familiar sub-group of Veerashaiva community who are the priestly class officiating in social and religious activities. The Math complex has an irregular shaped plan consisting of three interlinked courtyards with shivalays in them, and surrounded by three storeyed housing blocks built in traditional Newari style. Only two storeys survived the 2015 earthquake in most buildings; India's efforts at conservation of the buildings will be accompanied by appropriate adaptive reuse of the historic building complex.



»
Clockwise from top left: Gusthal Mahavihar; Ongoing work above the plinth level at the Nepal Bhasa Parishad Building; a historic building, it was originally the ancestral residence of eminent Nepali poet, Kavi Kesari Chittadhar 'Hridaya' who contributed towards preserving Newari language and culture; the Dwarapala painting found on either side of the doorway at Gusthal Mahavihara





Clockwise from below left: Timber carved window housing the main shrine of the Mahavihara at the Jangam Math complex; the courtyard of the Mahavihara at Jangam Math complex; an alternate view of the courtyard at Jangam Math; Adalat Bhawan as seen from Durbar Square, Nepal.



Clockwise from below left: Conservation and restoration work in progress by CLPIU of the NRA at Shree Mani Tarcheling; Dangyang Chhuklang Khang Gumba Rasuwa; Hissey Lendup Rasuwa; and Budhanilkantha Dharma



Following the 2015 earthquake, the Government of Nepal established the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) for the purpose of coordinating and implementing the post-disaster reconstruction programme. India is partnering with the Central Level Project Implementation Unit of the NRA for the conservation of another 16 heritage structures, which are being conserved as per Nepal's Ancient Monument Preservation Act aiming towards restoring the heritage sites to their past glory and traditions.

The most prominent among these sites is the project for the reconstruction of the Dharmashala at Budhanilkantha, locally known as Narayanthan to Hindus and Bhuijasee to the Buddhist Newar. Located about 10 km north of the city, the temple holds great significance as a heritage and religious sites of Nepal for the Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims. The temple precinct dates back to as ancient as the Mahabharata Period, and the monolithic basalt rock idol of Vishnu in the temple, reclining upon the eleven-headed Naga, is considered one of the largest sculptures of Nepal.

Other sites where India is working in partnership with the NRA are monasteries and Gumbas at Helambu, sindhupalchowk, Katunje, Chilime, Bridhim Rasuwa, Listikot, and Nuwakot.

A wide-angle photograph of a serene lake in Sri Lanka. In the foreground, the calm water reflects the sky and the surrounding landscape. A small, landscaped island with two tall palm trees and a statue stands in the middle of the lake. To the right, a white building with a red roof and a multi-tiered tower are visible, surrounded by lush green trees. In the background, misty mountains rise under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The left side of the image features a decorative green border with intricate patterns.

SRI LANKA

From the establishment of an Indian gallery at the iconic Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic to the construction of a cultural centre in Jaffna, India's contributions to strengthen cultural ties with Sri Lanka are many and varied



>>
This page: (Clockwise from above):
A panoramic shot of the Thiruketh-
eeswaram Temple, Sri Lanka; sculpture of
a deity; Newly built 100-pillared mandapa
leading to the sanctum

India and Sri Lanka are the closest of neighbours, with the edifice of the relationship built upon a legacy of cross-cultural, religious and linguistic interactions over a period of more than 2,500 years. To build on this relationship, help conserve the island nation's heritage, and display the cultural ties between the two nations, India has been involved in several conservation and other cultural projects in Sri Lanka over time. Prominent among them in recent years have been the restoration of the legendary Thiruketheeswaram Temple in Mannar, and the installation of a Sarnath-style Buddha statue, setting up of an Indian Gallery and proposed construction of a Faculty of Kandyan Dance at the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. The construction of the Jaffna Cultural Centre has been the latest of these cultural conservation ventures.

One of the five sacred Ishwarams dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Thiruketheeswaram Temple is located in the Mannar region of Sri Lanka and is venerated by Shaivites throughout the sub-continent. The ancient temple finds mention in the Thevaram hymns of the Nayanmars in Tamil literature. Overlooking the ancient Tamil port towns of Manthai and Kudiramalai, the temple has lain in ruins and been restored, renovated and enlarged by various royals and devotees throughout its history. The kings of the Pallava, Pandya and Chola dynasties contributed to its development and upkeep up to the late 16th century. It remained mostly closed thereafter. In more recent times, it was temporarily closed for 12 years during the armed conflict that involved the region. When it was re-opened post conflict, the Government of Sri Lanka sought India's cultural expertise to restore the temple to its past glory.

The restoration project was taken up in pursuance of the joint declaration issued during the State visit of former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to India in June 2010 for the restoration of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple, with the assistance of the Archaeological Survey of India and the College of Architecture and Sculpture in Mamallapuram, India. The restoration work that was to be done by India has been completed since.



To commemorate the 2,600th year of Enlightenment of Lord Buddha, India gifted Sri Lanka a 16-foot-tall idol of Lord Buddha sculpted in Sarnath style. It was installed at the entrance of the International Buddhist Museum complex in Sri Dalada Maligawa in September 2011. The Sakhyamuni statue is an exquisite sculpture and a replica of the famous original idol from the 5th century Gupta Period in Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon after attaining Enlightenment. The idol styled in the Dharmachakra Pravartanamudra (turning the wheel of law), along with its pedestal have been specially carved by master craftsmen in India out of a single piece of beige-coloured Chunar sandstone. The idol stands tall in Sri Lanka as a gift from the people of India that emphasises our cultural, civilisational and people-to-people connects.

Set against a picturesque backdrop of rolling hills and the pristine Kandy Lake in the royal temple complex of Kandy in Sri Lanka, Sri Dalada Maligawa or the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is a highly revered Buddhist temple where the left canine tooth of Gautama Buddha is enshrined. The sacred relic was brought to Sri Lanka from the city of Kalinga in ancient India during the reign of Kithsirimevan from 301 to 328 CE. It became a symbol of Sri Lankan kings and was preciously guarded in a special shrine built within the precincts of the royal palace.

Kandy being the last kingdom now houses the sacred relic at Sri Dalada Maligawa, which was first built in the 16th century. History reveals that it was destroyed by the Portuguese, rebuilt, burnt down by the Dutch, rebuilt again only to fall into disrepair. It was in the early 18th century that it was rebuilt once more and finely renovated in later years into the two-storey structure that stands today. The architecture is of the unique Kandyan style with a combination of styles that was used to build the shrines of the Sacred Tooth Relic

in earlier kingdoms. The temple is adorned with intricate carvings of gold, silver, bronze and ivory.

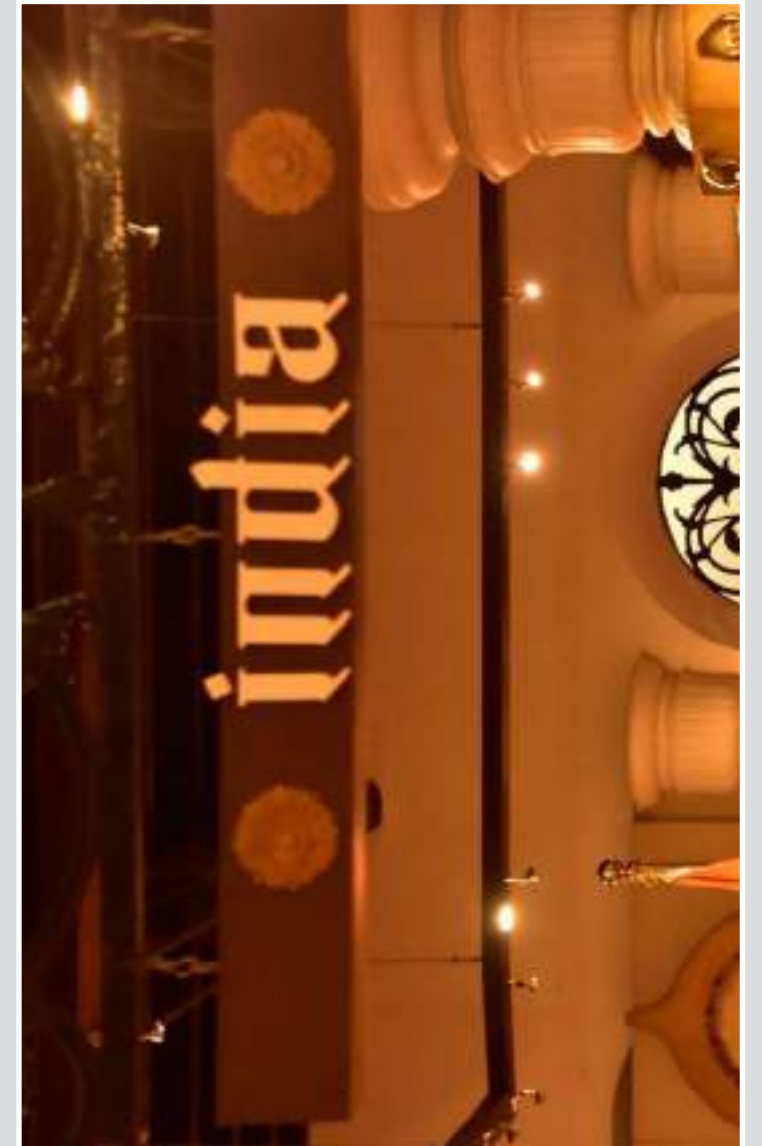
In October 2013, an Indian Gallery developed by the Government of India's National Council of Science Museums was unveiled at the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. The gallery, symbolises the historical links that bind the people of India and Sri Lanka. It primarily encapsulates and celebrates the origin of Buddhism in India and its peaceful spread to other parts of Asia and the world. In addition to replicas of the historic monuments of Bodh Gaya, it features replicas of the Sanchi Stupa, Ajanta Caves and other marvels of Buddhist art and architecture.

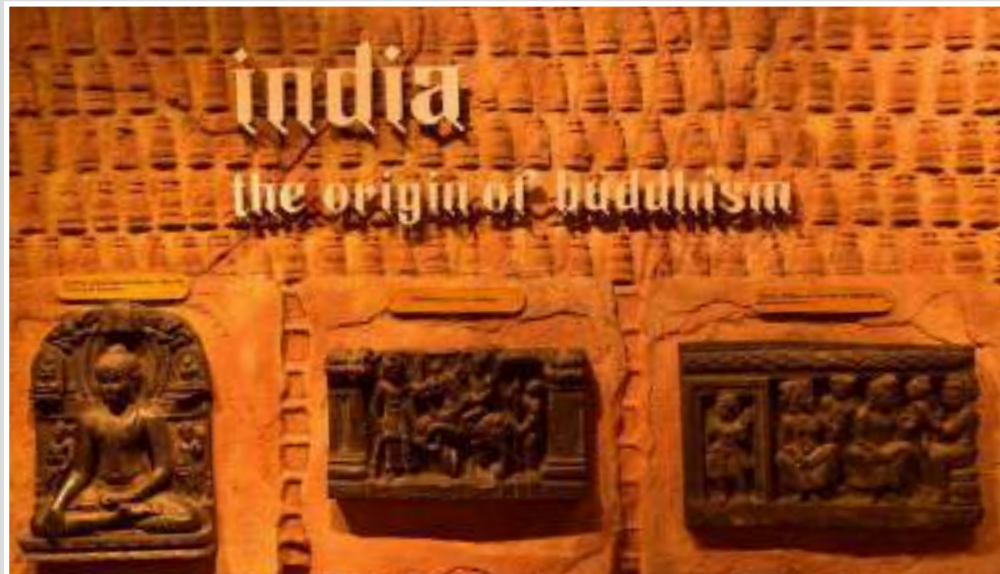
The gallery is sectioned around eight major themes. The Origin of Buddhism in India, Buddhist Pilgrimage sites in India, Symbolic Representation, theme showcases the primary events in Buddha's life, while the important Buddhist Pilgrimage sites in India is complemented with a separate multimedia kiosk providing detailed information in the form of texts, graphics and videos. The theme of Symbolic Representation includes Buddhist art in the pre-Christian era when Buddha was represented through symbols such as an empty throne, the Bodhi tree, a pair of footprints, a wheel, etc. Anthropomorphic Representation showcases the periods in different dynasties when stories pertaining to the life of Buddha were represented in human form, which are recreated here by 3D sculpture replicas.

Another theme depicts the miraculous events in Buddha's life through the four sites where they occurred. Hand gestures featuring mudras in 3D sculpture showcase how Buddha, Bodhisattva and other Buddhist disciples used their hands to depict a number of ritualised and stylised poses. The theme of Buddhist architectural marvels in India display the major contributions of typical Buddhist temple designs, such as stupas for structural



»»
Clockwise from above: Statue of The Buddha at the entrance of 'The Museum of World Buddhism' at Sri Dalada Maligawa, Kandy; entrance of the International Buddhist Museum Complex; A bust of The Buddha at the Indian Gallery, developed by the Government of India's National Council of Science Museums and unveiled at the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy, in October 2013





<<

Clockwise from above: The Indian gallery developed by the Government of India's National Council of Science Museums in Kandy, Sri Lanka features the origin of Buddhism in India showcasing primary events in The Buddha's life; depiction of Buddhist architectural marvels in India; Multimedia screen for visitors to understand the story of Buddhism; example of rock-cut architecture features at the gallery



significance, monolithic pillars for artistic aesthetics, rock-cut chambers for technique and more. These are shown by 3D sculptures, photographs and write-ups, while a multitask screen presentation also brings out the importance of Buddhist architecture in India. The final theme exhibits the spread of Buddhism through a multimedia presentation showing the various routes through which the religion reached other countries.

In yet another manifestation of the continued commitment of the Government of India to enhance the strong religious and cultural links between the two countries, an MoU was signed in 2018 for the establishment of the Faculty of Kandyan Dance at the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. Earlier, on his two-day visit to the iconic Buddhist temple in 2017, PM Modi had unveiled the plaque for this new training facility. On a request from the Sri Dalada Maligawa, the Government of India is undertaking this project to provide necessary infrastructure for training courses in Kandyan dance and drums, costumes, ornaments and musical instruments, lacquer painting, preservation of ancient frescoes and paintings, mahout training as well as sculpture making. The project entails the construction of a training school building, multi-purpose hall, supply of furniture, office equipment, musical instruments, costumes and other equipment. The High Commission of India is working in consultation with Sri Lanka's Ministry of Buddhasasana for this project.

The latest in India's endeavours to foster stronger cultural ties with its island neighbour, the Jaffna Cultural Centre was built with an Indian grant in the coastal city of Jaffna in Sri Lanka. Envisaged as a space to promote,

preserve and foster the cultural heritage of Jaffna and serve as a hub of cultural activities for the people of Sri Lanka, an MoU for the Cultural Centre was signed by the two governments in 2014, during Mahinda Rajapaksa's second term as President. The construction of the 11-storey structure, which includes an auditorium that can seat 600 persons, a conference hall, an amphitheatre and a digital library, was completed in early 2020.

Located next to the iconic Jaffna Public Library, the Cultural Centre is currently the tallest building in Jaffna town. It is designed to provide suitable social infrastructure for the people of the Northern Province, especially for the people of Jaffna, to help them reconnect with their cultural roots as well as to the rest of the country, and to rejuvenate and nurture the ancient cultural heritage of Jaffna. The Centre, while enabling the people of Jaffna to enjoy various local and international cultural products, will also serve as a centre for training, instruction and education in a variety of cultural disciplines. It is being developed as an iconic building that will emerge as a cultural forum that embodies coexistence and cooperation amongst the various communities on the island.

Since there has been little movement regarding its administration and as a pre-emptive measure to deter any army involvement in the cultural centre, India has offered to absorb the administrative costs for five years. This has been met with much optimism by the local governing bodies including the Governor and Mayor of Jaffna, who are of the opinion that India's support will give them time to stabilise, use the facility and make some revenue from it. Hopefully, with the administrative costs taken care of by India, the Jaffna Cultural Centre will see the light of day very soon.



MYANMAR

India has extended various conservation and cultural services to Myanmar, including among others, the restoration of the 12th century Ananda Temple apart from restoring over a dozen pagodas at the World Heritage Site of Bagan



>>
South-West side of the Ananda temple, Myanmar before and after chemical conservation



India and Myanmar share age-old cultural linkages making India a natural partner for cultural heritage conservation for Myanmar. India has extended various conservation and cultural services to Myanmar, including among others, the restoration of the 12th century Ananda Temple. Currently, the ASI with Indian funding is also involved in restoring a dozen pagodas in the World Heritage Site of Bagan, which were damaged in a devastating earthquake in 2016.

To strengthen the age-old cultural relations between the two neighbours, an MoU was signed by the Governments of India and Myanmar in July 2010 for the conservation of Ananda Temple at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bagan in Myanmar. A technical team from the ASI visited the temple in 2011 and conservation work was carried out in phases from May 2012 to June 2018. The Government of Myanmar also provided necessary assistance through their Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

In May 2012, during his State visit to Myanmar, former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh announced the gifting of a Buddha statue to the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. Later in the year 2017, during the State visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government of India gave a grant assistance for the installation of heat-resistant tiles in the Shwedagon Pagoda complex. The latest in India's endeavours towards preservation of cultural heritage with its neighbouring country has been the signing of an MoU in 2018 for the conservation of pagodas damaged by a severe earthquake in 2016.

Lying on a bend of the Ayeyarwady River in the central plain of Myanmar, Bagan is an ancient sacred landscape, featuring an exceptional range of Buddhist art and architecture and demonstrating centuries of cultural traditions of the Theravada Buddhist practice. It bears spectacular testimony to the peak of Bagan civilisation (11th -13th centuries CE), when the site was the capital of a regional empire. Over 3,595 monuments have been recorded here and the ensemble includes temples,

stupas, pagodas, monasteries, frescoes, sculptures and archaeological remains.

Located in the ancient city of Bagan, the Ananda Temple is a revered place of worship that was built in 1105 CE during the reign of King Kyansittha of the Pagan Dynasty. The temple is said to be an architectural wonder in a fusion of Mon and temple architectural styles of Bengal and Odisha, thus denoting a strong architectural influence from India. It is also said that the architecture of this temple closely resembles the Ananta cave temple in the Udayagiri hills of Odisha.

The temple is styled in a cruciform layout with several terraces leading to a small pagoda at the top covered by an umbrella known as hti. It houses four standing Buddhas, each one facing the cardinal directions. The temple is a perfectly dimensioned stylistic structure, built with bricks and plaster, depicting iconographic images in stones and plaques of terracotta-glazed tiles. The impressive temple has been titled the 'Westminster Abbey of Burma' and is also known as a 'veritable museum of stones'. Within the Ananda Temple complex are located a monastery built of red bricks called the Ananda Oakyaung and the Tharabha Gate, which is the only surviving gate of ancient Bagan.

The conservation work executed by the six-member ASI team at Ananda Temple includes repairs to the gates in each of the four directions, the boundary wall and approach corridors from south, north and west gates to the main shrine. Repair to shrines in the southwest, southeast, northeast and northwest quadrants was also carried out. The sandstone flooring in all the quadrants as well as in the outer and inner circumambulatory corridor were restored, while the rain water pipe on the roof was fixed in all directions. Other works included improvement of drainage, removal of excess earth deposits on the eastern side, plaster and stucco work repairs to the temple, exposure of paintings covered by multiple layers of lime wash on the entrance halls, facade cleaning and preservation, as well as landscape development at the eastern side. All conservation operations have been taken up after

formal consultations with the Temple Trust Committee and local officers of Department of Archaeology and National Museum of Government of Union of Myanmar.

More recently, India took upon the task of restoration and conservation of pagodas in Bagan that had suffered damage due to a severe earthquake in 2016. The ASI identified 12 such pagodas for renovation under the first phase. The renovations commenced in January 2020 but was temporarily suspended due to the pandemic followed by extreme weather conditions, before work resumed in October the same year. During the India visit of Myanmar President Htin Kyaw, India had agreed to offer technical and financial help for the conservation and restoration of the damaged structures and paintings at the site.

Away from Bagan in the erstwhile capital of Yangon in southern Myanmar, stands the most sacred Buddhist pagoda in the country—the Shwedagon Pagoda. Believed

to contain the relics of four previous Buddhas of the present kalpa, the Shwedagon Pagoda, also known as Great Dagon Pagoda or the Golden Pagoda, was built more than 2,500 years ago, which would make it the oldest Buddhist stupa in the world. The stupa's plinth is made of bricks and covered with gold plates. People from all over the country, including the monarchs starting from Queen Shin Saw Pu, have donated gold to maintain the pagoda.

India's restoration efforts in Myanmar serves to strengthen the historical and civilisational links between the two countries, while also opening up new avenues of international diplomatic and economic cooperation. For Myanmar, the conservation work done by India has helped revitalize the country's most important icons of heritage and culture, and make them accessible for generations to come.



>>
South side Buddha
image at the
Ananda Temple,
Myanmar, before
and after chemical
conservation



>>
This page: (Above) Stucco work before and
after chemical preservation; (below) South
Side porch of the Ananda Temple, before and
after chemical conservation



MINOR PROJECTS



GUYANA

The Indian Arrival Monument, inaugurated on May 5, 2019, coincided with the 181st Arrival Day of Indian indentured labour in the South American country. Gifted by the Government of India to Guyana, symbolizing our shared history

every year on May 5, the tiny South American nation of Guyana commemorates the landing of the first set of indentured labourers from India at its shores with the 'Indian Arrival Day'.

It was on the occasion of the 175th Anniversary of the Indian Arrival Day in 2013 that the Government of Guyana initiated a proposal for the installation of the Indian Arrival Monument. The location of Palmyra Village in East Berbice, near the banks of the Berbice river, was chosen for it was on these banks at Highbury, that the first batch of indentured labourers from India had landed way back in 1838. As a symbol of our enduring friendship, the Government of India gifted the Indian Arrival Monument consisting of six bronze statues to Guyana.

With the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act throughout the British empire in 1833, plantation owners in the British West Indies became desperate to find a new source of labour for their sugar estates. Emancipation lent the Guianese labourers both physical and occupational mobility, allowing them to withhold their labour temporarily or permanently as well as vacate the estates if living and working conditions weren't satisfactory. A gradual exodus of labourers from the plantations soon began, and the planters were left seeking an alternate and competitive labour force, which would give them the same kind of labour control that they were accustomed to under slavery.

On May 5, 1838, the final year of emancipation in the British West Indies, a small batch of 396 Indian immigrants arrived from Calcutta aboard two ships, Whitby and Hesperus. Popularly known as the 'Gladstone Coolies', they landed at Highbury on the banks of the Berbice river in British Guyana, thus marking the beginning of the indenture system of labour. By the time it was abolished in 1917, a total of 2,40,000 indentured labourers from India had already arrived in Guyana.

Most of the immigrants originally belonged to the British Indian provinces of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madras (present day Tamil Nadu), and were largely responsible for changing the fortunes of the sugar industry, the mainstay of Guyana's economy, from predicted ruin to prosperity. Over the years, East Indians evolved from indentured labourers to become the single largest ethnic group in Guyana, numbering over 7,50,000 and comprising 44 percent of the country's population. Today, they have branched out of sugar plantations into all aspects of economic and political life in Guyana.

The Indian Arrival Day is thus an important public holiday in Guyana to commemorate the first Indians to arrive here, and the Indian Arrival Monument was also commissioned with the same intent. The mounted bronze memorial consisting of six figures depicts a Hindu man, a Muslim man, a Drum boy, a woman with a bundle, a woman with tawa and kadahi, and a man with a cutlass and rice plant. Each of the figures carry something of importance depicting remnants of

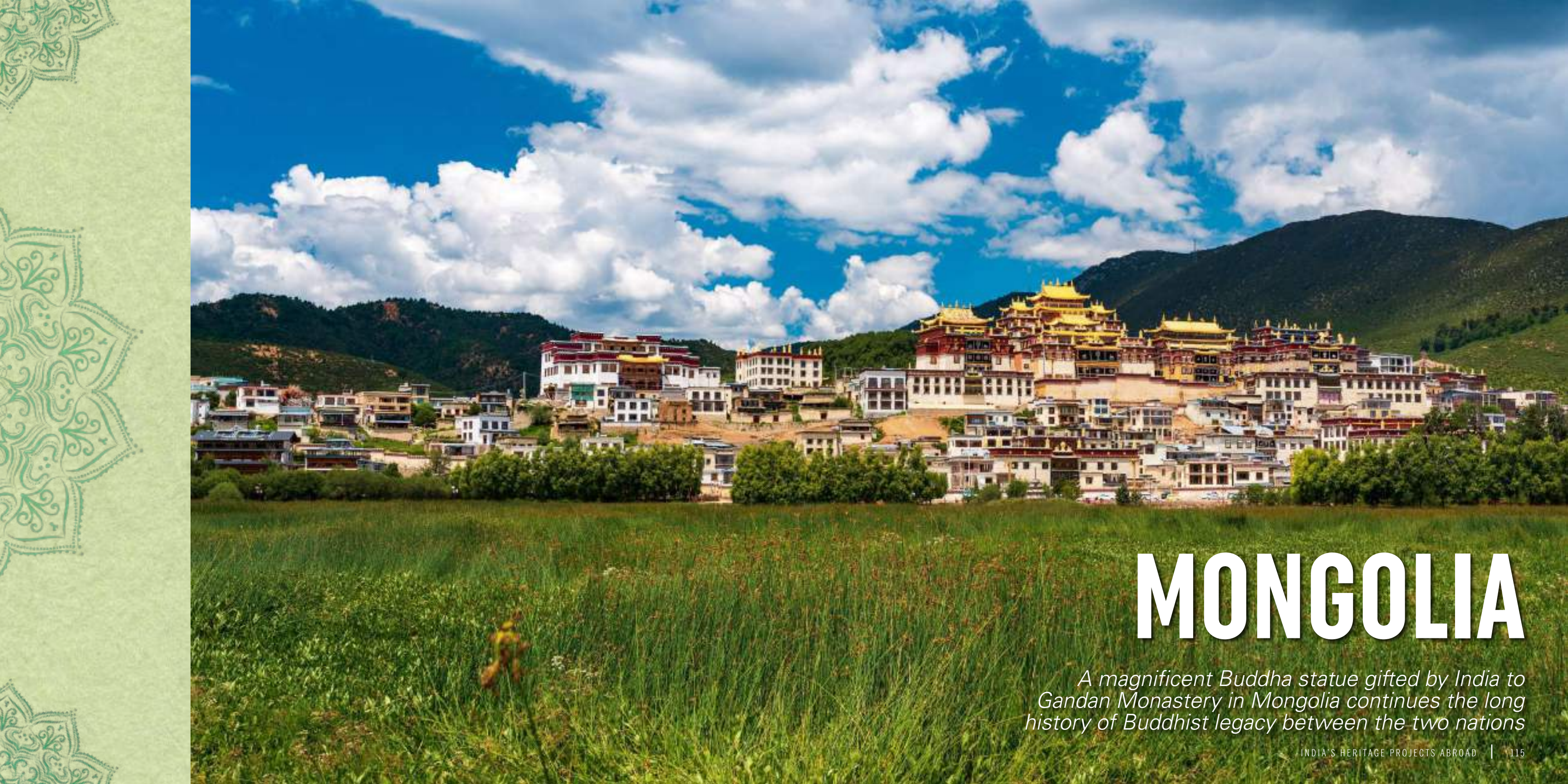
their everyday lives that they carried across the seas—a jahaji bhandal (ship bundle) loaded with food, spices, herbs, clothing and jewellery; their gods and religious texts; drum, cooking utensils, grass knives, cutlass and rice plants. The monument was conceptualized and designed by Philbert Gajadhar and Winslow Craig of Guyana, and cast by the well-known Indian sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar. The monument arrived in Guyana from India in October 2016, and its installation at the site at Palmyra Village in Berbice was completed by February, 2019.

The Indian Arrival Monument was jointly inaugurated by H.E. David Granger, the then President of Guyana and Akhilesh Mishra, the then Director General of ICCR, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Guyana and Indian High Commissioner to Guyana, other Cabinet Ministers, Ambassadors of other countries and local dignitaries. The monument serves as a reminder of the day when Indians first arrived in Guyana as mere labourers and how they have gone on to achieve success in other spheres of Guianese life today.



<< Left: Dignitaries at the inauguration of Indian Arrival Monument in Guyana, South America on May 05, 2019. It is located in Palmyra Village in East Berbice, near the banks of the Berbice river.





MONGOLIA

A magnificent Buddha statue gifted by India to Gandan Monastery in Mongolia continues the long history of Buddhist legacy between the two nations

According to an old Mongolian legend, a Buddhist monk from India once carried sacred water from river Ganga to Mongolia and poured it into a lake there, leading the lake to be named Ganganuur.

In September 2019, during the State visit of the President of the Republic of Mongolia to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted President Khaltmaagiin Battulga with a kalash of Ganga jal, which was to be poured in the Ganganuur Lake in Mongolia. This was meant as a gesture to further cement the collective cultural legacy between the two nations, which has been forged over the years on the strong foundations of our shared Buddhist heritage and values of freedom and democracy. During the visit, the two leaders also jointly unveiled a Buddhist statue, gifted by India to the Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. This gift of a life-sized statue of Lord Buddha and two disciples had been announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his historic visit to Mongolia in May 2015.

Centuries ago, the spirit of Buddhism traversed across the Himalayas and reached the steppes of Mongolia, binding the two nations with a precious shared heritage. Throughout history, India and Mongolia have interacted through the vehicle of Buddhism, while some historians also believe that Mongolian forefathers came from the Himalayan mountains. In 1924, the then Prime Minister of Mongolia, A. Amar too mentioned the same in his book, Short History of Mongolia. To most Mongols, India is the land of the Buddha and for ages lamas and students from Mongolia travelled to Nalanda, once the largest residential university in India, to study Buddhism. "The historic and cultural collaboration

between India and Mongolia is most fascinating and unique, and is as old as the history of the spread of Indian culture and ideas into Central Asia and Siberia," the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee had stated in 1978 when he was the External Affairs Minister.

Located in the capital of Ulaanbaatar, the Gandantegchinlen Monastery, shortened as Gandan Monastery, is the most important Mongolian Buddhist monastery that was first established by Emperor Yongzheng in 1727 and constructed in 1809. Only one wooden pillar remains from the original temple, while the rest of the structure was rebuilt and restored over the years. Roughly translating to the 'Great Palace of Complete Joy' in Tibetan, the monastery currently has over 150 monks in residence. Under state protection since 1994, it features a 26.5 metre-high statue of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva who embodies the compassion of all Buddhas.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was entrusted with commissioning a befitting statue and it engaged famous Indian sculptor Ram Sutar for the same. After three years of painstaking work, Sutar completed the life-size statue of Buddha and his two disciples. While the statue of Lord Buddha in the centre stands tallest at 18 feet with a 12 feet base, the two disciples on either side are about 10 feet tall with 4.3 feet bases. These stunning golden statues, cast in brass, copper, zinc and bronze. They were installed in the Grand Assembly Hall in April 2019 and were informally consecrated in a traditional Mongolian Buddhist ritual.

The statues were then formally inaugurated jointly by PM Modi and President Battulga during the latter's visit to India on September 20, 2019, in an impressive ceremony organized digitally. The magnificent statues of Lord Buddha and his disciples continue to attract

a large number of devotees and tourists to Gandan Monastery. They have also witnessed three grand events since their installation—the 50th anniversary of the Asian Buddhist Conference on Peace (ABCP), the 3rd Samvaad Hinduism Buddhism International Conference in 2019, and the Buddha Purnima celebrations in 2020.

The spiritual connect continues to bind the people of India and Mongolia and stands testimony to 'Dharma' being a pillar of India's relationship with Mongolia.



« From top: The President of the Republic of Mongolia and Prime Minister Narendra Modi jointly unveil the statue of Lord Buddha, gifted by India to the Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar; the life-size statue of the Buddha and his two disciples designed by Indian sculptor Ram Sutar



MAURITIUS

Set up with support by the Government of India, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius is an apex institute of oriental learning that has served as a bridge for bringing together the cultures of the two countries

the relationship between India and Mauritius dates back to hundreds of years when the first artisans were brought here from Puducherry and Tamil Nadu in the 1730s. Since then, the beautiful island nation has received a steady stream of Indian workers throughout various colonial occupations to work on sugar plantations, and after the abolition of slavery, as indentured labourers numbering at about half a million in total. Today, Indians constitute nearly 70 percent of this key maritime neighbour's population. On his State visit to Mauritius in February 2021, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met the Indian diaspora there and tweeted, "Feels like homecoming. Thank the vibrant Indian community for keeping our faith & fervour alive in Mauritius. A shining example of all that India stands for... peace, pluralism, shared progress & universal brotherhood—values more relevant than ever today."

Since its inception in December 1969, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Mauritius has played a key role in preserving and promoting different cultures, heritage and arts of India, while also contributing to national policy initiatives spanning both academic and cultural areas. It was established as an apex institute of learning by the Government of Mauritius with the support of the Government of India at a joint meeting between the then Prime Ministers of the two nations,

Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Indira Gandhi, respectively. The site for the institute at Moka was donated by Mon Desert Alma Limited, the company which owned the sugar estate and lands nearby. On the 3rd of June 1970, the foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Gandhi, and the building was inaugurated on October 9, 1976 jointly by the two leaders. As a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, the objective of the MGI was to establish a centre for studies of Indian culture and traditions and to promote them through education.

Over the last 50 odd years, MGI has established itself as the nodal institute for promoting and preserving Indian culture for the Indian-origin residents of Mauritius. It has also been responsible for preserving the Archives of Indian Labour, who migrated from India since the 18th century under colonial rule. The Archives, while serving as a priceless resource for visiting researchers, are most importantly an authentic repository of the historical records of Indian indentured labour migration to Mauritius from 1834 to 1922.

The Mahatma Gandhi Institute has further evolved into a complex organisation with responsibilities covering Secondary and Tertiary Education as well. It runs a network of six secondary schools located in different regions of the country, such as the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School in Moka, Flacq, Solferino and Nouvelle France, as well as the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School in Ilot. In addition, the Gandhian

Basis School in Moka specialises in pre-vocational education based on Gandhian principles. Other major components of the MGI include a Specialized Library of Languages and Culture, a Folk Museum of Indian Immigration, a Language Resources Centre, an Art Gallery, multi-lingual Printing Press, Auditorium and the Subramania Bharati Lecture Theatre. In addition, MGI promotes Indian Studies, Performing Arts, Fine Arts, Mauritian Area Studies and Indological Studies. It also offers online introductory courses in Asian languages

such as Hindi, Bhojpuri, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi and more for Mauritian nationals.

The Government of India has been instrumental in the success of the MGI as a premier institute for the preservation and promotion of Indian culture and education. It has been extending various support, including funds on a regular basis for the functioning of the Institute, with the intention of promoting Indian languages in the African continent through teaching and research activities.



<<

Left: Ms K. Nandini Singla, High Commissioner of India, Port Louis, Mauritius garlanding the statue of Mahatma Gandhi as part of 152nd Gandhi Jayanti celebrations at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Moka, Mauritius. Right: The Institute (MGI) was set up by an Act of Parliament, which was passed on 23 December 1970 as a joint initiative of the governments of India and Mauritius.



MALAYSIA

Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart Najib Razak, in 2015, the Torana Gate at Brickfields in Kuala Lumpur is being dubbed as a cornerstone of the friendship between India and Malaysia.



<<

Facing page and this page: The intricately carved Torana, inspired by the Toranas of the great Buddhist sculpture of Sanchi, has carvings and relief work representing ancient Indian art as well as the Islamic art form. The Torana gate is a gift from the Government of India to Malaysia, as a mark of continued friendship between the two countries. It was influenced by Hindu and Buddhist architecture of the Indian subcontinent.

UZBEKISTAN

Archaeological excavations in Kara Tepe, Termez, Uzbekistan indicate that settlements existed here in the 1st to 5th centuries. Among the important Buddhist finds in southern Uzbekistan are the Buddhist manuscripts of Zang Tepe.





Clockwise from above left: Tunnel in the underground settlement of Buddhist monks on the Kara-Tepe hill, Termez, Uzbekistan; Panorama of the settlement of the monks; Column bases from ancient Buddhist temple complex from 2nd century.
Facing page - Clockwise from top left: Walls and corridors of the Buddhist monastery Fayaz Tepe, Termez, Uzbekistan; Close-up view of the basis of a column from a Buddhist monastery of the 1-2 century AD; Underground cells of Buddhist monks. The cave dwellings were founded in the 1st century and abandoned in the 5th century AD.





A Public Diplomacy initiative of
THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

