



BACKGROUNDERS
Press Information Bureau
Government of India



Revitalising India's Cultural Heritage

Preserving the Past, Enriching the Future

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Strengthening India's Cultural Identity

India's rich cultural legacy reflects its civilizational heritage and national identity. It has strengthened heritage conservation through digitisation, tourism infrastructure, and cultural preservation. The Government has undertaken major initiatives to preserve, promote, and revitalise India's cultural assets. These efforts have strengthened tourism, connectivity, visitor facilities, and local economic development while safeguarding the nation's cultural identity.

Enhancing Heritage Preservation

Adopt a Heritage 2.0

- The **Adopt A Heritage 2.0** scheme was launched in September 2023 to develop and maintain visitor-friendly amenities at **Protected Monuments of National Importance**.
- As of March 2026, a total of 30 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed under the **Adopt a Heritage 2.0** programme.
- Recorded strong visitor participation at adopted monuments, with a **total footfall of 13.59 million visitors during FY 2024–25**.

Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)

- The **PRASHAD** scheme focuses on developing pilgrimage and heritage destinations by improving infrastructure, sanitation, safety, and visitor amenities.
- **Total 54** projects have been sanctioned across **28 States and Union Territories** (as of February 2026).
- **Projects Completed: 32** (as of December 2025)
- **Total Project Cost: Rs. 1,726.74 crore.**

Swadesh Darshan

- **Swadesh Darshan**, seeks to develop an integrated tourism infrastructure across thematic tourist circuits.
- **Tourism Circuits Covered:** The 15 thematic tourist circuits covered under the Swadesh Darshan scheme are the Buddhist, Coastal, Desert, Eco, Heritage, Himalayan, Krishna, North-East, Ramayana, Rural, Spiritual, Tirthankar, Tribal, Wildlife, and Sufi circuits.
- **Total 76** Projects has been Sanctioned (as of March 2026), with a total Investment Rs. **5,290.33 crore**.
- **Projects Completed: 75** (as of March 2026).

Under **Swadesh Darshan 2.0**, the focus has moved beyond circuit-based development to adopt a destination-centric approach.

- Under this scheme, **53 projects** have been sanctioned with a total investment of **Rs. 2,208.31 crore**, which are at various stages of implementation by States and Union Territories.

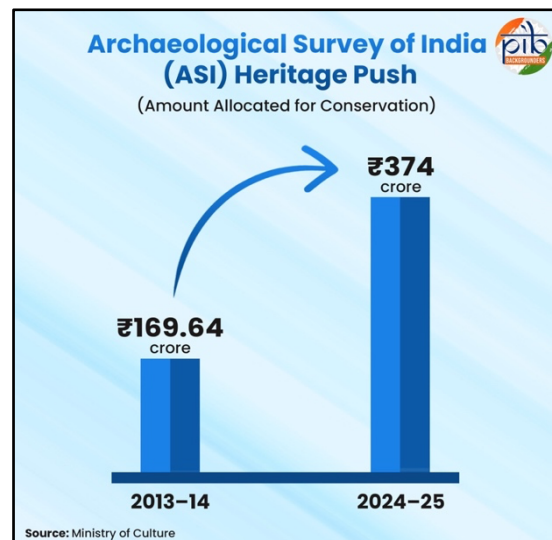
Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD)

- **Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD)**, introduced in March 2024 under **Swadesh Darshan 2.0**.
- The scheme focuses on developing sustainable tourism destinations through a competitive, challenge-based framework.
- **Focus Areas:** Holistic planning, innovation, community participation, and destination development.
- Total no. of Projects Sanctioned are **38**, with a total Investment of **₹697.94 crore**.

Archaeology and Monument Preservation

Archaeological Survey of India

- **The Archaeological Survey of India is a premier organization for archaeological research and conservation of India's cultural heritage.**
- ASI carries out its functions through a network of around **38** Circles, across the country.
- Safeguards **3,686** centrally protected monuments, supported by strengthened conservation systems and scientific restoration methods (*as of April 2026*).
- **Rs. 374 crore** was allocated for the conservation and maintenance of protected monuments (**FY 2024–25**).
- Over the last five years, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has issued **121 permissions for archaeological projects** across the country.



National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA)

- **National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA)** is implemented by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- NMMA focuses on creating a comprehensive national database of monuments and antiquities to support conservation planning and management.
- As of March 2026, the mission has documented **1.84 lakh Monuments** and **17.20 lakh Antiquities** across India.

HRIDAY Scheme

Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)

- **HRIDAY focuses** on integrating urban development with heritage conservation while preserving the unique character of heritage cities.
- The scheme also focuses on rejuvenation of water bodies and green spaces, smart technology and safety enhancements, and the boosting of local livelihoods through tourism.
- **Coverage: 12 heritage cities** across India.
- **Key Outcomes:**
 - Improved cleanliness, tourism and community development in **Ajmer, Amaravati and Badami.**
 - Promoted heritage revitalisation, inclusivity and economic growth in **Amritsar, Gaya and Varanasi.**
 - Enhanced tourism infrastructure and public amenities in **Warangal and Puri.**
 - Strengthened safety and urban infrastructure in **Kancheepuram and Mathura.**
 - Advanced environmental sustainability and heritage conservation in **Velankanni.**
 - Developed comprehensive heritage zones, processional streets, CCTV networks, and the Bet Dwarka Darshan Circuit in **Dwarka.**
- **Overall Impact:** Improved quality of life for residents and strengthened tourism potential.
- **Mission Period:** Concluded on **31 March 2019.**

Reclaiming India's Cultural Treasures

The Government has intensified efforts to repatriate sacred relics and antiquities taken abroad through colonial exploitation, foreign occupations, and illegal trafficking.

Repatriation of Sacred Relics

Major repatriation achievements include:

- **Piprahwa Relics of Lord Buddha** returned in 2025 after **127 years**
- **Goddess Annapurna idol** repatriated from Canada in 2021 after **108 years**
- **Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana bronze idols** returned from the UK in 2020
- Sacred and cultural objects have also been returned from **Australia, the USA, the UK, Germany, Singapore, and Canada.**

Global Exposition of Sacred Relics:

India expanded the international exposition of sacred Buddha relics to strengthen cultural and civilizational ties.

- **Vietnam (2025):** Attracted over 15 million devotees
- **Kalmykia, Russia (2025):** Welcomed over 90,000 visitors
- **Bhutan (2025):** Featured an exposition during the **Global Peace Prayer Festival**
- **Sri Lanka (2026):** Featured an exposition at the **Gangaramaya Temple, Colombo**

Domestic exhibitions were also organised in **New Delhi** and **Ladakh** in 2026, showcasing the reunited Piprahwa relics.

Repatriation of Antiquities

- Number of antiquities retrieved during the last five years: **615** (up to 30 June 2026)
- Verified Objects Handed Over: **11** to concerned organisations and institutions
- 09 objects have been given on loan to **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** for display at the New Parliament Building, 01 object to the National Museum, and **14 objects** to the Indian Institute of Heritage.

Museums and Cultural Infrastructure

Museum Grant Scheme

- **The Museum Grant Scheme provides** financial assistance for establishing new museums and strengthening existing museums at the regional, state, and district levels.
- **Support Areas:** Modernization, digitization of museum collections, and capacity building of museum professionals.
- Under this scheme, various initiatives have been undertaken to develop **virtual museums, theme-based museums, and Virtual Experiential Museums (VEMs)**.
- **Total Sanctioned Amount during the last five financial years: Rs. 184.39 Crores**
- **Total Utilized Fund during the last five financial years: Rs. 101.19 Crores**

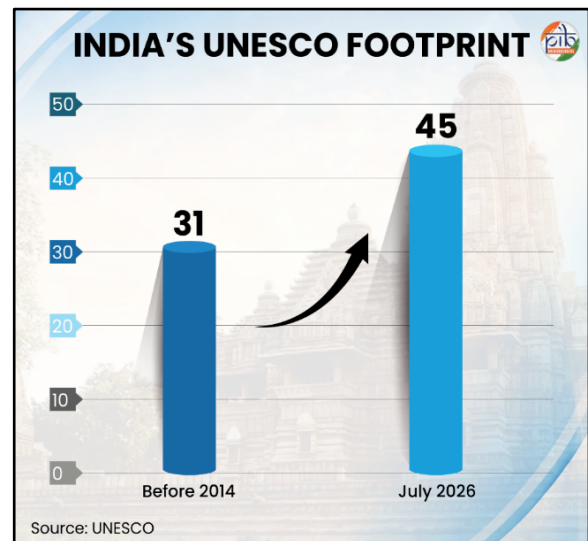


India's First Archaeological Experiential Museum-Vadnagar, Gujarat

- The 'Archaeological Experiential Museum' is the only museum in the world where history and excavation come together.
- **Spread over an area of 12,500 square meters and built at a total project cost of ₹298 crore**
- The museum displays over **5,000 artefacts**, including food grains, DNA samples, and skeletal remains.
- It also features a **4,000 sq. m.** open excavation site showcasing archaeological remains at **16–18 metres** depth.
- **An experiential walkway** enables visitors to observe archaeological findings unearthed during excavations.

Global Recognition Through UNESCO

- India has significantly expanded its global heritage recognition over the past decade. India now has **45 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.
- India hosted the **46th UNESCO World Heritage Committee Session in New Delhi (2024)**.



Preserving Knowledge Through Digitisation

Digitisation of Cultural Heritage (Gyan Bharatam)

Gyan Bharatam Mission

- **Mission was launched in 2025, with a focus on** preserving, digitizing, and promoting access to India's manuscript heritage.
- **Technology Integration:** Modern technologies are adopted for long-term preservation and global accessibility.

National Manuscript Survey

- National Manuscript Survey launched in March 2026 with the aim to identifying, documenting, and creating a comprehensive national database of manuscripts.
- During this survey, more than **1.19 crore** manuscripts have been reported.

- The total number of digitized manuscripts available across the country is **over 8 lakh**, out of which, more than **4.40 lakh manuscripts** are available on Gyan Bharatam portal at present for public access.
- Mission approved with an outlay of **₹482.85 crore** (2024–31) to scale digitization and access.

Digitisation of Museum Collections

- The **Ministry of Culture** is digitising museum collections and archival resources through **JATAN software**, developed in technical collaboration with **C-DAC, Pune, Maharashtra**.
- A **National Digital Repository** has been created through the **Museums of India portal** to provide digital access to museum collections.
- The portal hosts digitised collections from **8 National Level Museums, 2 ASI Site Museums, and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Museum, Pune, Maharashtra**.
- **3,75,707 artefacts out of 4,88,983 artefacts** have been digitised and made available online (as on July 15, 2026).

Technology-Enabled Heritage Conservation

Modern technologies such as LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) scanning, GIS (Geographic Information System)-based mapping, and drone surveys are being used to strengthen heritage documentation and conservation. The Government is also leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support the digitisation, documentation, and accessibility of cultural assets and heritage data.

Harnessing AI for Cultural and Knowledge Preservation

India is using AI to preserve languages, manuscripts, and cultural heritage while improving access to education and public services.

- **BHASHINI** (launched in 2022) supports **22 languages (voice)** and **36 languages (text)**, with **350+ AI models** and over **4 billion+ language transactions**. It enabled real-time translation at events like **Kashi Tamil Sangamam** and **Maha Kumbh 2025**.
- **BharatGen** is developing AI models for **22 Scheduled Languages**, while **Adi-Vaani** supports tribal languages such as **Santali, Bhili, Mundari, and Gondi** through digital preservation and translation. **Adi-Vaani** is an AI-based platform for preserving and revitalising **India's tribal languages**. It enables real-time translation between Hindi, English, and tribal languages, speech-to-text transcription, language learning for younger generations, and digitisation of folklore and oral traditions.
- Platforms like **Anuvadini, e-KUMBH, SPPEL, Sanchika**, and **Gyan-Setu** are expanding multilingual education, and preserving endangered languages and traditional knowledge.
- Over **5 crore+ learners** are connected through digital education platforms like **SWAYAM**.

Vedic Heritage Portal

- **Launched in March 2023** under the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**, it aims to preserve, document, and provide digital access to India's Vedic knowledge traditions.

- **Coverage: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda** traditions.
- It includes extensive audio-visual material, manuscripts, and ritual documentation, with more than 500 hours of recordings integrated into the platform.
- It records **Vedic Shakhas (recensions)** and oral traditions to preserve living knowledge systems.

UNESCO Recognition:

- **Tradition of Vedic Chanting** recognised as **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage**.
- **Rigveda manuscripts** included in **UNESCO's Memory of the World Register**.

Conserving India's Cinematic Heritage

National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM)

- **Launched: 2015**, with a focus to preserve, digitize and restore India's cinematic heritage.
- It covers feature films, short films, and documentaries across Indian languages.
- As of December 2025, **1,469 titles**, equaling 4.3 Lakh minutes of films have been digitized.
- Restored films are maintained by the **National Film Archive of India (NFAI)** and are available on demand through its official website.

National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC)

- **National Museum of Indian Cinema** was inaugurated in 2019 with a project cost of **Rs.140.61 crore**.
- **Showcases 100+ years of Indian cinema** through artefacts, vintage film equipment, photographs, memorabilia, interactive exhibits and multimedia displays.
- **Visitor Footfall: 17,000+ visitors** in **May 2026**, reinforcing its position as a major cultural and tourism destination.

Carrying India's Cultural Legacy Forward

India's cultural heritage is a living link between its past, present, and future. Through sustained conservation, digitisation, restoration, and promotion, the Government has strengthened efforts to safeguard this legacy while widening public access. These efforts will help create a future where heritage remains a dynamic source of knowledge, identity, and inspiration for generations to come.

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