

CSIR Weekly Briefing: Cultural Connect

Volume: 1, Issue: 10 | 15th July 2026

Bharat-Indonesia launch decade-long Prambanan restoration partnership



On 8th July 2026, *Bhartiya Puratatva Sarvekshan* (Archaeological Survey of India,ASI) formally commenced its decade-long conservation and restoration project at the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Prambanan Temple Complex in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The initiative marks a

landmark chapter in Bharat–Indonesia cultural cooperation and reflects the two countries' shared commitment to preserving their common civilisational heritage. The project focuses on restoring the Perwara (subsidiary) shrines, which form an integral part of the ninth-century Hindu temple complex dedicated to the Trimurti Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Originally comprising 240 temples, including 224 Perwara shrines, Prambanan is the largest Hindu temple complex in Indonesia and one of the most important surviving monuments of Hindu architecture in Southeast Asia.

The decade-long restoration programme will initially concentrate on 54 Perwara temples located in the northeastern section of the second courtyard, with subsequent phases gradually extending to the remaining structures over the next ten years. Of the original 224 subsidiary shrines, only six have been completely restored, while more than 200 temples continue to remain either partially ruined or collapsed, highlighting the scale and complexity of the conservation effort. The restoration will employ internationally accepted principles of archaeological conservation, combining detailed documentation, structural stabilisation, stone conservation, scientific analysis, and heritage craftsmanship to preserve the authenticity and historical integrity of the monument. *Bhartiya Puratatva Sarvekshan* (Archaeological Survey of India,ASI), renowned for its expertise in conserving ancient monuments both within Bharat and abroad, will provide technical knowledge, conservation methodologies, and professional training in collaboration with Indonesian heritage authorities.

https://newsonair.gov.in/india-indonesia-launch-collaborative-conservation-initiative-for-prambanan-temple-compound/

INS Sudarshini's port call at New York signifies Bharat-US cultural partnership



On 15th July 2026, The *Bhartiya Nau Sena* (Indian Navy) sail training ship INS Sudarshini successfully concluded its port call at New York, United States, as part of the Lokayan 2026 transoceanic expedition. The visit represented an important milestone in Bharat's cultural outreach by showcasing the country's rich maritime traditions, naval heritage, and centuries-old seafaring legacy to an international audience. Organised under the leadership of the Bhartiya Nau Sena (Indian Navy) in coordination with the *Raksha Mantralaya* (Ministry of Defence) and the *Bhartiya Dootawas* (Embassy of Bharat) in Washington D.C., the voyage highlighted how maritime heritage can serve as a bridge for cultural understanding and people-to-people engagement. The expedition also reflected Bharat's growing emphasis on projecting its civilisational identity through heritage diplomacy alongside strategic cooperation.

INS Sudarshini participated in the International Naval Review 250 (INR-250) and the Sail4th 250 celebrations, organised to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States. During the commemorative events, the majestic sailing vessel joined naval ships from several countries in a ceremonial fleet review and sailed past globally recognised landmarks, including the Statue of Liberty and along the Hudson River, offering thousands of spectators an opportunity to witness Bharat's heritage sail training vessel. The graceful appearance of INS Sudarshini among historic tall ships symbolised the enduring maritime traditions that have connected civilisations across oceans for centuries. Its participation demonstrated Bharat's historical engagement with global maritime networks and reaffirmed the importance of the seas as channels for cultural exchange, commerce, and peaceful interaction.

Commissioned in 2012, INS Sudarshini is a three-masted barque designed primarily for sail training, seamanship, and international goodwill missions. Named after the legendary Sudarshana Chakra, the ship embodies the values of discipline, navigation, and maritime excellence. Over the years, it has undertaken numerous international voyages across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific, representing Bharat at international festivals, naval reviews, and cultural events. Through these expeditions, the vessel has become an ambassador of Bharat's maritime civilisation, highlighting the country's ancient traditions of oceanic navigation, coastal trade, shipbuilding, and cultural interactions that flourished across the Indian Ocean Region for more than two millennia. These voyages also reflect the maritime vision associated with ancient ports such as Lothal, Muziris, and Tamralipta, which historically connected Bharat with diverse cultures across Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

Source: NewsOnAIR (Government of India)
https://newsonair.gov.in/ins-sudarshinis-port-call-at-new-york-signifies-cultural-partnership-between-india-us/

Aipan art, Manohari Gold Tea for Indonesian leadership



On 8th July 2026 , during the official visit to Indonesia, Bharat's rich artistic traditions and regional craftsmanship were highlighted through the presentation of carefully selected cultural gifts that reflected the country's diverse heritage and centuries-old artisanal excellence. Rather than being ceremonial souvenirs, the gifts represented distinct cultural traditions from different regions of Bharat, demonstrating the country's commitment to strengthening international relations through cultural outreach and the celebration of shared civilisational values. Each gift embodied a unique aspect of Bharat's intangible and tangible cultural heritage, ranging from heritage painting and textile weaving to metal craftsmanship, papier-mâché artistry, and premium tea cultivation.

Among the gifts presented to Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was a heritage Aipan artwork from Uttarakhand , an ancient ritual folk art practised predominantly by women in the Kumaon region. Created using natural colours on a red ochre background, Aipan is deeply associated with religious ceremonies, festivals, and auspicious occasions. The artwork presented was dedicated to Lord Shiva , one of the principal deities of Hinduism, symbolising spirituality, prosperity, and the enduring civilisational links that have historically connected Bharat and the Indonesian archipelago through shared religious traditions and cultural exchanges. The gift also highlighted the importance of preserving local artistic practices that continue to be transmitted across generations.

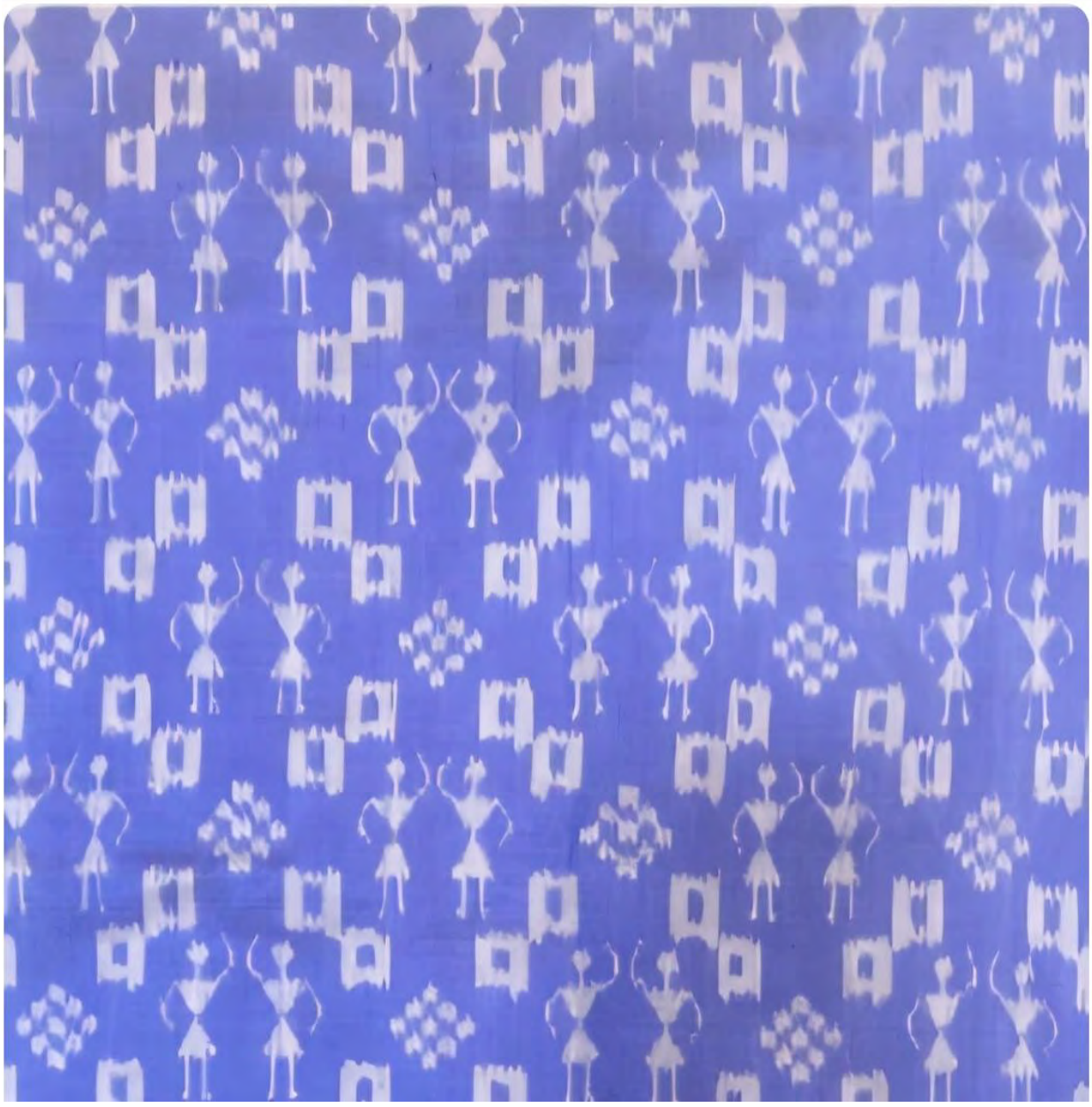


The President was also presented with Manohari Gold Tea from Assam , one of Bharat's rarest and most exclusive speciality teas. Produced in extremely limited quantities of approximately 25 grams per day , this handcrafted golden tea is recognised internationally for its distinctive flavour, meticulous production process, and exceptional quality. The selection showcased Bharat's long-standing tea heritage and the craftsmanship of tea growers in Assam, while

drawing attention to the country's diverse agricultural traditions and premium artisanal products that have earned global recognition.



Another gift comprised a beautifully handcrafted Kashmiri Papier-Mâché bowl , representing one of the oldest surviving craft traditions of the Kashmir Valley. This centuries-old art form involves the careful moulding, painting, and lacquering of paper pulp into decorative objects featuring intricate floral and geometric motifs inspired by Persian, Central Asian, and local artistic influences. Alongside this, a Repoussé silver decorative plate , created using the heritage repoussé metalworking technique in which intricate designs are hammered from the reverse side of silver sheets, highlighted the extraordinary skills of Bhartiya metal artisans and the continuity of ancient craft traditions.



On the same occasion, Odisha Ikat handloom silk was presented to Puan Maharani , Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia (DPR RI) . Odisha Ikat, known locally as Bandha , is among Bharat's most celebrated handloom traditions and is distinguished by its complex resist-dyeing technique in which yarns are dyed before weaving to produce intricate geometric and floral patterns. The textile reflects centuries of weaving expertise preserved by artisan communities in Odisha and symbolises the country's commitment to safeguarding heritage handloom heritage.

Source: ANI

https://aninews.in/news/world/asia/pm-modi-gifts-unique-indian-artworks-speciality-tea-handloom-silk-to-indonesian-leadership20260712214246/

PM Modi gifts heritage handicrafts to New Zealand Prime Minister, promoting Bharat's culture



On 11th July 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his historic official visit to New Zealand the first by a Bhartiya Prime Minister in nearly four decades used the occasion to

celebrate Bharat's extraordinary cultural diversity by presenting a carefully curated collection of heritage artworks, localhandicrafts, and sporting memorabilia to Prime Minister Christopher Luxon. The cultural gifts were selected to represent the living traditions of different regions of Bharat and reflected the country's enduring commitment to strengthening international friendships through cultural outreach. The visit, which also elevated bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership, demonstrated that cultural heritage remains an important pillar of Bharat–New Zealand relations alongside economic, educational, and strategic cooperation.

Among the most significant gifts was a Dhokra Tree of Life sculpture from Bastar, Chhattisgarh, created using the ancient lost-wax casting technique, one of the world's oldest surviving metallurgical traditions. Practised continuously for more than 4,000 years, Dhokra art traces its origins to the Indus Valley Civilisation and is closely associated with the tribal artisan communities of central Bharat. Every sculpture is handcrafted individually, ensuring that no two pieces are identical. The Tree of Life is a universal cultural symbol representing harmony between humanity, nature, and the cosmos, while also signifying prosperity, continuity, wisdom, and regeneration. By presenting this masterpiece, Bharat highlighted not only its remarkable metallurgical heritage but also the invaluable contribution of *Vanvasis* (forest dwelling communities) in preserving local artistic knowledge across generations. The gift reflected Bharat's commitment to safeguarding heritage craftsmanship and promoting the recognition of local artisan communities on the global stage.

Prime Minister Luxon was also presented with a Heritage Pahari Cap from Uttarakhand, an important emblem of the Himalayan region's cultural identity. Handcrafted by local artisans using time-tested local weaving techniques, the cap represents dignity, hospitality, and community pride. It occupies an important place in the cultural life of Uttarakhand and is traditionally worn during worship rituals, festivals, weddings, community gatherings, and state ceremonies. Through this gift, Bharat celebrated the diversity of its regional textile heritage while acknowledging the cultural significance of local weaving practices that continue to flourish in the Himalayan states. Another meaningful cultural offering was a hockey stick signed by the Bhartiya Women's Hockey Team, presented to commemorate their historic victory in the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup, held in New Zealand in 2026. The gift symbolised the growing prominence of women's sport in Bharat and recognised sport as an important medium of cultural exchange, youth engagement, and international friendship. It also celebrated the longstanding sporting relationship between Bharat and New Zealand, where hockey occupies a significant place in both countries' sporting traditions. The signed hockey stick served as a tribute to excellence, perseverance, teamwork, and the inspirational achievements of Bhartiya women athletes on the global stage.

Source: Lokmat Times (via IANS)
https://www.lokmattimes.com/international/pm-modi-gifts-traditional-handicrafts-to-new-zealand-prime-minister-promoting-indian-culture/amp/

Bharat's PM Modi gifts Bastar Dhokra art to Australian PM



On 9th July 2026 , Bharat's Prime Minister Narendra Modi , during his official visit to Australia , highlighted Bharat's rich artistic traditions and localcraftsmanship by presenting Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese with a handcrafted Dhokra metal boat from Bastar, Chhattisgarh . The selected gift reflected Bharat's commitment to promoting its living cultural traditions through cultural outreach, while celebrating the creativity of *Vanvasis* (Forest dwelling artisan communities) whose skills have been preserved for centuries. The presentation also coincided with a broader effort to strengthen bilateral relations by showcasing Bharat's diverse cultural identity alongside strategic, economic, and people-to-people cooperation.

The Dhokra metal boat represents one of Bharat's oldest surviving tribal craft traditions and is produced using the ancient lost-wax casting technique, a metallurgical process that has remained virtually unchanged for more than 4,000 years. Archaeological evidence traces this technique to the Indus Valley Civilisation , with the famous bronze Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro regarded as one of its earliest known examples. In Bastar, Dhokra craftsmanship has evolved into a distinctive cultural tradition practised by *Vanvasis* (Forest dwelling artisan communities) who transform brass and bell metal into sculptures depicting nature, mythology, village life, animals, and spiritual symbols. Every artefact is handcrafted individually, ensuring that no two pieces are identical. The boat motif itself symbolises journey, connectivity, prosperity, and cultural

exchange, making it a meaningful representation of the historical maritime and civilisational links that have connected peoples across regions for centuries.

The presentation of the Bastar Dhokra artwork also brought international attention to the remarkable crafts-skill of more than 10,000 artisans spread across Bastar's seven districts, where Dhokra continues to provide livelihoods while preserving an invaluable cultural legacy. In recent years, renewed interest generated through initiatives promoting local crafts, including the Vocal for Local campaign, has encouraged many artisans and younger generations to return to heritage metal casting. This revival has strengthened local craft clusters, increased market visibility for localproducts, and enhanced recognition of tribal artisans as custodians of Bharat's intangible cultural excursion. International appreciation of Dhokra art further contributes to expanding opportunities for cultural tourism, artisan entrepreneurship, museum collaborations, and global exhibitions featuring Bhartiya heritage crafts.

Source: Lokmat Times (via IANS)
https://www.lokmattimes.com/national/pm-modis-gift-of-bastars-dhokra-art-to-australian-pm-brings-global-spotlight-on-tribal-craft/

Darjeeling Himalayan Railway to represent Bharat at UNESCO forum in South Korea



On 15th July 2026, The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) was selected to represent Bharat at the ‘World Heritage Site Managers' Forum, organised by United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) in Busan, Republic of Korea. The Forum, scheduled from 16th–23rd July 2026, is being organised alongside the 48th Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which will be held in Busan from 19th–29th July 2026. This marks the first occasion on which the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway will formally present its conservation experience before an international gathering of World Heritage site managers, providing Bharat with an opportunity to showcase one of its most iconic living heritage sites and its achievements in heritage conservation.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, popularly known as the Toy Train, is one of Bharat's most celebrated industrial heritage landmarks. Opened in 1881, the narrow-gauge railway connects New Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, traversing the Eastern Himalayas through breathtaking landscapes, tea gardens, mountain settlements, and engineering marvels such as loops, zigzags, and steep gradients. Recognising its outstanding engineering achievement and cultural significance, UNESCO inscribed the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway on the World Heritage List in 1999 under the broader category of the Mountain Railways of Bharat . It later became part of the serial World Heritage property that also includes the Nilgiri Mountain Railway and the Kalka–Shimla Railway. The railway is not merely a transport system but a living testimony to nineteenth-century engineering, mountain railway innovation, and the harmonious relationship between technology, landscape, and local communities.

The participation of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway at the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum is an international recognition of Bharat's continuing efforts to conserve and manage heritage assets through sustainable and community-oriented approaches. The Forum brings together site managers from across the world to exchange experiences, discuss conservation challenges, strengthen professional networks, and develop collaborative strategies for safeguarding World Heritage properties. Under the 2026 theme,‘Connection and Communication: Participatory Approaches to Managing World Heritage,’ the event places particular emphasis on community participation, knowledge exchange, and inclusive heritage management. Bharat's presentation will highlight the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway as a successful example of how heritage conservation can coexist with active public use, tourism development, and local economic sustainability.

Source: ETV Bharat

https://www.etvbharat.com/en/state/in-a-first-bengals-toy-train-reaches-unesco-forum-in-south-korea-enn26071503537

Indie Haat 2026: Celebrating Bharat's Handloom Heritage



On 13th July 2026 , Union Minister of Textiles Shri Giriraj Singh inaugurated 'Indie Haat – A Celebration of Bharat's Rich Handloom and Handicraft Heritage' at the National Crafts Museum and Hastkala Academy, New Delhi . Organised by the *Vastra Mantralaya* (Ministry of Textiles), the exhibition was held from 10th–19th July 2026 with the objective of promoting Bharat's heritage handloom and handicraft traditions, strengthening artisan livelihoods, and creating greater public appreciation for the country's diverse craft heritage. The event brought together master artisans, handloom weavers, craft entrepreneurs, designers, scholars, and visitors from across the country, transforming the museum into a vibrant platform celebrating the creativity, knowledge systems, and living traditions that have been preserved by artisan communities for centuries.

The exhibition featured the work of 48 master artisans and handloom weavers representing different regions of Bharat, alongside 12 design-oriented brands that demonstrated how heritage crafts-skill can successfully engage with contemporary design and modern markets. By creating direct interaction between artisans and visitors, Indie Haat enabled craftspeople to narrate the stories behind their creations, explain heritage production techniques, and highlight the cultural significance of their crafts. This direct engagement strengthened public appreciation of handmade products while providing artisans with valuable opportunities for market exposure, professional networking, and sustainable livelihood generation.

Among the major attractions were several of Bharat's celebrated craft traditions, including Gulabi Minakari from Varanasi, renowned for its delicate pink enamel work on silver, Stone Inlay crafts-skill inspired by the architectural heritage of *Agravan* (Agra), Dokra metalwork ,

created using the ancient lost-wax casting technique that has survived for over four millennia, heritage manuscript paintings, reflecting the country's rich heritage of illustrated manuscripts and miniature art, and the world-famous Blue Pottery of Jaipur, distinguished by its vibrant turquoise and cobalt blue floral motifs. Together, these crafts represented the remarkable diversity of Bharat's regional artistic traditions and demonstrated the continuity of knowledge systems passed down through generations of artisan families.

A distinctive feature of Indie Haat was the organisation of live craft demonstrations, allowing visitors to observe artisans practising their heritage skills in real time. These demonstrations included metal casting, handloom weaving, enamel decoration, pottery making, stone carving, and heritage painting techniques, enabling audiences to appreciate the precision, patience, and artistic excellence involved in creating handcrafted objects.

Source: *Vastra Mantralaya* (Ministry of Textiles, GoI)
https://texmin.nic.in/pressrelease/union-minister-textiles-shri-giriraj-singh-inaugurate-indie-haat-celebration-indias-rich-handloom-and-handicraft-heritage-july-13-2026

National Theatre Festival celebrating 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'



On 15th July 2026 , the Sangeet Natak Akademi, under *Sanskriti Mantralaya* (Ministry of Culture) , launched a nationwide National Theatre Festival under the theme 'Vande Mataram – The Spirit of Patriotism through Bhartiya Theatre.' The festival was organised to commemorate two landmark cultural milestones the 150th anniversary of '*Vande Mataram*', one of Bharat's most influential patriotic compositions by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Mahakavi

Kalidasa Jayanti, honouring one of the greatest classical Sanskrit poets and dramatists. Conceived as one of the largest theatre celebrations in recent years, the festival aimed to reaffirm theatre's enduring role in preserving Bharat's cultural heritage, strengthening national unity, and promoting the country's extraordinary linguistic and artistic diversity. The initiative was announced by Sangeet Natak Akademi Chairperson Dr. Sandhya Purecha , who emphasised that the festival would carry the message of patriotism, cultural unity, and civilisational continuity to audiences across the country.

Beginning 15th July 2026 , the festival was simultaneously organised across multiple centres throughout Bharat, bringing together theatre groups, directors, actors, musicians, scholars, students, and cultural organisations from every region. More than150 theatrical performances were scheduled in over 39 Bhartiya languages and dialects, making it one of the most linguistically diverse theatre initiatives undertaken by the Akademi. The productions reflected the richness of Bharat's regional theatrical traditions while presenting narratives centred on freedom, sacrifice, harmonious culture, constitutional values, and national integration. Through this multilingual approach, the festival demonstrated how theatre continues to function as a living bridge connecting diverse linguistic communities while celebrating the country's shared civilisational heritage.

The theme 'Vande Mataram – The Spirit of Patriotism through Bhartiya Theatre' reflected the enduring cultural significance of 'Vande Mataram,' which has inspired generations of freedom fighters and remains an enduring symbol of national consciousness. Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and first published in the novel 'Anandamath', the song transcended literature to become a cultural expression of unity, courage, and devotion to the motherland. The year-long commemoration of its 150th anniversary, initiated by the *Sanskriti Mantralaya* (Ministry of Culture), seeks to reconnect younger generations with its historical and cultural legacy through performances, exhibitions, educational programmes, and public participation. By integrating this theme into theatre, the Akademi transformed the stage into a medium for preserving collective memory and celebrating the cultural values that shaped Bharat's freedom movement.

The simultaneous observance of Mahakavi Kalidasa Jayanti added another important cultural dimension to the festival. Kalidasa's literary masterpieces, including 'Abhijnanasakuntalam', 'Meghadutam', 'Raghuvamsham', and 'Kumarasambhavam', represent the pinnacle of classical Sanskrit literature and continue to influence theatre, dance, music, and visual arts across Bharat and beyond. By commemorating Kalidasa alongside the anniversary of 'Vande Mataram', the festival created a unique dialogue between Bharat's classical dramatic heritage and its modern patriotic consciousness, illustrating the continuity of the country's literary and theatrical traditions over more than two millennia.

Source:ANI
https://www.aninews.in/news/entertainment/out-of-box/sangeet-natak-akademi-to-celebrate-150-years-of-vande-mataram-with-national-theatre-festival-chairman-sandhya-purecha-shares-details20260714213927/

Bharat Tex 2026: Bharat's largest global textile event



On 14th July 2026 , Union Minister of Textiles Shri Giriraj Singh inaugurated Bharat Tex 2026, Bharat's largest global textile exhibition, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi . Organised under the leadership of the *Vastra Mantralaya* (Ministry of Textiles) in partnership with leading textile industry bodies, the event emerged as one of the world's most comprehensive platforms showcasing the country's textile value chain, ranging from heritage handlooms and handicrafts to advanced technical textiles and sustainable manufacturing. Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "5F Vision",Farm to Fibre, Fibre to Factory, Factory to Fashion, and Fashion to Foreign ,the exhibition reflected Bharat's aspiration to integrate its centuries-old textile traditions with modern innovation, global trade, and sustainable development. The event also highlighted the textile sector not merely as an economic industry but as a living expression of Bharat's civilisational heritage, cultural diversity, and artisanal excellence.

Held at the Bharat Mandapam , the exhibition brought together more than 7,000 domestic and international buyers , over 20,000 textile products , and exhibitors from 14 countries , including the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Portugal, Spain, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Nepal , and several other partner nations. The event showcased the complete textile ecosystem of Bharat, encompassing natural fibres, handloom products, handicrafts, garments, home furnishings, technical textiles, fashion accessories, sustainable fibres, and textile machinery. More than a trade exhibition, Bharat Tex 2026 functioned as a global cultural platform where heritage crafts-skill, local weaving knowledge, contemporary design, and international collaboration converged to celebrate the richness of Bharat's textile heritage.

A defining feature of Bharat Tex 2026 was its emphasis on preserving and promoting Bharat's centuries-old weaving traditions alongside contemporary innovation. Visitors experienced an extraordinary range of regional textile traditions, including Banarasi silk, Kanchipuram silk, Pashmina, Sambalpuri, Chanderi, Maheshwari, Ikat, Jamdani, Bandhani, Kalamkari, Bhagalpuri silk, Khadi, and numerous Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged textiles representing different regions of the country. These handwoven traditions embody generations of inherited knowledge, local craftsmanship, natural dyeing techniques, and distinctive cultural identities that have evolved over centuries. The exhibition highlighted how textile traditions continue to preserve regional histories, ritual practices, artistic symbolism, and community identities while providing sustainable livelihoods to millions of weavers and artisans across Bharat.

The event also served as a major international knowledge-sharing platform, featuring more than 350 speakers from over 20 countries who participated in conferences, policy dialogues, business forums, fashion showcases, and technical sessions. Discussions focused on sustainable textiles, circular economy practices, innovation in textile manufacturing, international trade, digital technologies, technical textiles, skill development, and the future of global fashion. These deliberations encouraged collaboration among policymakers,researchers,designers, entrepreneurs, exporters, and academic institutions while positioning Bharat as a leading contributor to the evolving global textile ecosystem.The participation of international delegates further strengthened cultural and commercial partnerships by facilitating exchanges of heritage knowledge, design philosophies, and sustainable production practices.

Source: NewsOnAIR (GoI)
https://newsonair.gov.in/bharat-tex-2026-begins-at-bharat-mandapam-in-new-delhi/

Prepared by: Pragya , Anubha , Triloki