

CSIR Weekly Briefing: Cultural Connect

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Bharat to open permanent UNESCO heritage exhibition in Azerbaijan

On 16th July 2026, *Bharatiya Dootavaas* (Embassy of India) in Azerbaijan announced a landmark cultural diplomacy initiative with the establishment of a permanent exhibition on Bharat's UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. The exhibition was scheduled to be inaugurated on 18th July 2026, as announced by Ambassador Abhay Kumar through a special video message inviting visitors to participate in the celebrations. This permanent display highlights Bharat's 44 UNESCO World Heritage properties, comprising 36 cultural sites, seven natural sites, and one mixed site, thereby presenting the country's unparalleled civilisational legacy to an international audience. The exhibition seeks to familiarise the people of Azerbaijan with Bharat's rich architectural heritage, ancient monuments, archaeological treasures, sacred pilgrimage centres, and natural landscapes that collectively represent thousands of years of continuous cultural evolution.

The inauguration was accompanied by an Indian Street Food Festival, showcasing the extraordinary diversity of Bharatiya culinary traditions. Visitors were offered popular delicacies such as chai, samosa, and a variety of chaats representing both Northern and Southern part of Bharat, thereby introducing them to the country's vibrant gastronomic heritage. The celebrations also featured traditional and contemporary musical performances, cultural dance presentations, and a fashion show in which Azerbaijani participants enthusiastically wore traditional Bharatiya attire. These activities demonstrated the universality of cultural expression and encouraged meaningful people-to-people interactions beyond formal diplomatic engagement.

By presenting its UNESCO-recognised heritage alongside its diverse culinary, artistic, and performing traditions, Bharat reinforces the idea that its civilisation is not merely preserved in monuments but continues to thrive through living traditions, festivals, handicrafts, music, dance, textiles, and community practices. The exhibition also highlights the values of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) the ancient Bharatiya philosophy that regards the entire world as one family thereby promoting mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, and respect for shared human heritage.

Source: Lokmat Times (IANS feed)
https://www.lokmattimes.com/international/azerbaijan india set to open permanent exhibition on its world heritage sites/

Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre Launches Inaugural 'Chitralekha' Art Exhibition in Sri Lanka

On 16th July 2026, the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), functioning as the cultural arm of the *Bharatiya Uchchayog* (High Commission of India) in Sri Lanka, announced the inaugural "Chitralekha" Bharat Alumni Art Exhibition, which commenced on 17th July 2026 at the University of Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo. Scheduled as a three-day exhibition, this significant cultural event marked another milestone in the enduring civilisational and cultural partnership between Bharat and Sri Lanka. The exhibition brought together talented artists from Sri Lanka who had pursued higher education, training, or artistic exchanges in Bharat, thereby celebrating the deep intellectual, artistic, and educational bonds shared by the two neighbouring countries.

The "Chitralekha" Art Exhibition provided an important platform for alumni artists to present their creative works inspired by Bharatiya artistic traditions while also reflecting Sri Lanka's indigenous cultural heritage. The exhibition symbolised the harmonious blending of artistic ideas, demonstrating how education and cultural exchanges foster mutual respect, creativity, and long-term people-to-people connections. Through paintings and other visual artworks, participating artists expressed themes rooted in shared civilisational values, spirituality, history, nature, and cultural identity, reinforcing the timeless artistic dialogue between the two nations.

Bharat and Sri Lanka have enjoyed centuries of cultural interaction through Buddhism, Sanskrit learning, literature, classical art, architecture, sculpture, dance, music, maritime trade, and pilgrimage traditions. The spread of Buddhism from Bharat to Sri Lanka over two millennia ago established one of the strongest civilisational links in Asia, while continuous exchanges of scholars, monks, artisans, and travellers enriched the cultural heritage of both societies. Events

such as the "Chitralekha" exhibition continue this legacy by strengthening artistic collaboration and encouraging contemporary cultural expression rooted in shared historical traditions.

Source: NewsOnAir (AIR)
https://newsonair.gov.in

Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra Celebrates World Sanskrit Day (Vishwa Sanskrit Diwas) in Sri Lanka

On 17th July 2026, the *Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra* (SVCC), the cultural wing of the Bharatiya Uchchayog (High Commission of India) in Colombo, commemorated World Sanskrit Day (Vishwa Sanskrit Diwas) in collaboration with 12 universities and academic institutions across Sri Lanka. The event also marked the Silver Jubilee (25 years) of the Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra, highlighting a quarter-century of dedicated efforts towards strengthening the civilisational, linguistic, and cultural ties between Bharat and Sri Lanka. The celebration underscored the enduring relevance of Sanskrit, one of Bharat's oldest classical languages, as a shared intellectual and spiritual heritage connecting the two countries for more than two millennia.

The programme brought together scholars, academicians, students, Sanskrit enthusiasts, and cultural practitioners to celebrate the timeless legacy of Sanskrit literature, philosophy, grammar, science, and spirituality. Sanskrit has historically served as a repository of Bharatiya knowledge systems, preserving foundational texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, and numerous works on astronomy, mathematics, medicine, architecture, and performing arts. The language has also profoundly influenced Sri Lankan religious and literary traditions through the spread of Buddhism, with many Buddhist scriptures, philosophical concepts, inscriptions, and cultural practices bearing the imprint of Sanskrit.

The Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra has consistently promoted Bharatiya culture in Sri Lanka through courses in Yoga, Hindi, Sanskrit, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Hindustani and Carnatic music, visual arts, and literary activities. Celebrating Vishwa Sanskrit Diwas alongside

its Silver Jubilee symbolised Bharat's commitment to cultural diplomacy by strengthening educational cooperation and preserving shared heritage. The event reinforced the idea that language is not merely a means of communication but a carrier of civilisation, values, philosophy, and cultural continuity, thereby deepening the historic friendship and people-to-people ties between Bharat and Sri Lanka.

Source: NewsOnAir (AIR)
https://newsonair.gov.in

Bihar's Thekua wins hearts in Slovakia as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Gift Goes Viral

On 17th July 2026, a traditional delicacy from Bharat's eastern state of Bihar Thekua gained international recognition after Richard Raši, Speaker of the National Council of Slovakia, shared a video of himself tasting the sweet that had been presented to him as a gift by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during the Prime Minister's official visit to Slovakia in June 2026. The video quickly attracted widespread attention.

Thekua is a cherished traditional sweet from Bihar, closely associated with the sacred festival of Chhath Puja, one of the most revered festivals dedicated to Surya Dev (the Sun God) and Chhathi Maiya. Prepared using wheat flour, jaggery or sugar, ghee, and aromatic ingredients, Thekua symbolises devotion, purity, gratitude, and familial harmony. During Chhath Puja, devotees prepare Thekua as a sacred offering (Prasad), making it not merely a culinary item but an integral part of Bharat's living cultural and spiritual traditions.

While sharing the video, Richard Raši remarked that diplomacy extends beyond official meetings and agreements, emphasising that thoughtful cultural gestures create lasting emotional connections between nations. He observed that food possesses the unique ability to unite people across cultures and geographical boundaries, serving as a universal language of friendship and mutual respect. His appreciation of Thekua reflected the growing importance of culinary

diplomacy, wherein traditional regional cuisines become ambassadors of national culture and heritage.

The gesture also showcased Bharat's philosophy of celebrating "Unity in Diversity," where regional traditions collectively contribute to the nation's rich cultural identity. Every state of Bharat possesses distinctive culinary customs shaped by local history, geography, festivals, and community practices, making food an important medium for preserving intangible cultural heritage. Through the simple yet meaningful gift of Thekua, Bharat projected its civilisational values of hospitality, warmth, and cultural inclusiveness while strengthening bilateral ties with Slovakia. The episode demonstrated that cultural diplomacy often flourishes through authentic traditions, reinforcing international friendships by celebrating the shared human experiences of food, culture, and community.

Source: The Tribune
https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/bihars thekua wins hearts in slovakia as pm modis gift to richard rasi goes viral/

Bharatiya Dootavaas in Nepal Celebrates National Reading Month with Nepal Bharat Library Tour

On 18th July 2026, the Bharatiya Dootavaas (Embassy of India) in Kathmandu celebrated National Reading Month (Rashtriya Pathan Mah) by organising a guided educational tour of the Nepal Bharat Library for Nepali high school students, followed by an interactive discussion highlighting the importance of books, literacy, and lifelong learning. The programme marked the culmination of National Reading Month, observed annually from 19th June to 18th July in memory of P. N. Panicker, widely recognised as the "Father of the Library and Literacy Movement in Kerala." The initiative aimed to encourage reading habits among young learners while strengthening educational and cultural ties between Bharat and Nepal.

During the visit, students explored the library's rich collection of books and participated in engaging discussions on literature, knowledge, and the transformative role of reading in personal and intellectual development. A key feature of the programme was an interactive conversation on the book "ISRO: A Personal History," which introduced students to Bharat's remarkable achievements in space science and technological innovation. Participants enthusiastically shared their favourite books, exchanged ideas on the value of reading, and reflected on how literature broadens perspectives, nurtures creativity, and inspires future aspirations.

The celebration also highlighted the importance of reading in preserving cultural heritage and promoting informed citizenship in the digital era. Alongside conventional reading habits, National Reading Month encourages the responsible use of digital libraries and online educational resources, ensuring that knowledge remains accessible to wider sections of society.

Source: The Tribune (ANI feed)

https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/culture_of_reading/nepal_indian_embassy_celebrates_reading_month_with_library_tour_book_discussion

Bharat in Morocco Hosts 'Connect with Bharat 2026' to Strengthen Diaspora Engagement

On 21st July 2026, the *Bharatiya Dootavaas* (Embassy of India) in Rabat, Morocco, organised "Connect with Bharat 2026", a special outreach programme aimed at strengthening engagement with the Bharatiya diaspora residing in Morocco. The initiative formed part of the Embassy's continuing efforts to maintain close ties with overseas Bharatiya communities while promoting Bharat's rich cultural heritage, traditions, and civilisational values abroad. Addressing the gathering, the Ambassador described the event as an opportunity for members of the diaspora to come together, reconnect with one another, and collectively celebrate Bharat's vibrant culture and age-old traditions. The programme reaffirmed the important role played by overseas Bharatiyas in strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing Bharat's global cultural presence.

The event brought together members of the Bharatiya community from diverse professional, educational, and social backgrounds, creating a platform for interaction, networking, and cultural exchange. Such gatherings help preserve the cultural identity of overseas Bharatiyas by encouraging the celebration of traditional festivals, languages, music, dance, cuisine, and customs while simultaneously fostering greater understanding of Bharatiya civilisation among the people of the host country. Diaspora engagement programmes also provide opportunities for younger generations born or raised abroad to remain connected with their ancestral heritage and cultural roots.

Beyond its diplomatic significance, the programme reflected Bharat's enduring civilisational philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The World is One Family), which emphasises harmony, inclusiveness, and respect for cultural diversity. By bringing together members of the diaspora to celebrate their heritage, the event projected Bharat's cultural outreach through its people, traditions, and values rather than solely through official diplomatic channels. "Connect with Bharat 2026" therefore served as an important platform for strengthening cultural continuity, fostering people-to-people relations, and reinforcing the historic friendship between Bharat and Morocco through shared cultural experiences and enduring community engagement.

Source: ANI News
https://aninews.in

Bharatiya Sanskritik Sambandh Parishad **(ICCR) Reviews Academic and Cultural Initiatives at Kurukshetra University**

On 21th July 2026, a delegation from the *Bharatiya Sanskritik Sambandh Parishad* (Indian Council for Cultural Relations, ICCR) visited Kurukshetra University to review and assess the institution's academic and cultural initiatives aimed at promoting international educational cooperation. During the visit, ICCR official Sanjay Vedi stated that the organisation's primary objective is to connect students from different countries with Bharat's higher education system, cultural traditions, and civilisational heritage. The assessment reflected ICCR's continued

commitment to strengthening educational diplomacy by creating meaningful academic partnerships and cultural exchanges between Bharat and the international community.

The delegation interacted with university authorities, faculty members, and students to evaluate programmes that facilitate international learning, cultural understanding, and academic collaboration. Particular emphasis was placed on initiatives that encourage foreign students to study in Bharat while experiencing its diverse traditions, languages, arts, history, and values. Such interactions not only enhance academic excellence but also strengthen mutual appreciation between different cultures through direct engagement and shared educational experiences.

The visit also highlighted the growing significance of educational diplomacy as an important dimension of international relations. Higher education has increasingly become a powerful instrument for building trust, strengthening cultural understanding, and developing enduring people-to-people connections that extend well beyond formal diplomatic engagement. By encouraging students from diverse countries to experience Bharat's cultural richness firsthand, ICCR contributes to the country's global cultural outreach while promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual respect.

Source: The Tribune

https://www.tribuneindia.com

Grand International Exposition of the Sacred Piprahwa Relics of Lord Buddha Opens in New Delhi

On 16th July 2026, the *Rashtriya Sangrahalaya* (National Museum) in New Delhi opened to the public the Grand International Exposition of the Sacred Piprahwa Relics of Lord Buddha, titled "The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One." The exhibition brought together the sacred Piprahwa relics and the precious relic jewels that had been taken abroad during the colonial period and have now been reunited with the relics preserved at the Rashtriya Sangrahalaya, New Delhi, and the Indian Museum, Kolkata. This landmark exposition represents

a significant step towards preserving and showcasing Bharat's rich Buddhist heritage while reaffirming the country's role as the birthplace of Buddhism and one of the world's foremost centres of spiritual and civilisational traditions.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General Gurmeet Singh Chawla observed that the return and public display of these sacred relics reflects the renewed relevance of Lord Buddha's teachings as a guiding force for global peace, compassion, harmony, and non-violence. The exposition offers visitors an opportunity to witness objects of profound historical, archaeological, and spiritual significance associated with one of humanity's greatest spiritual teachers. The sacred relics are revered by millions of Buddhists across the world and symbolise the universal values of wisdom, compassion, mindfulness, and enlightenment that continue to inspire societies across continents.

The exhibition also highlights Bharat's centuries-old Buddhist heritage, which has profoundly influenced the cultural and spiritual development of Asia. From the sacred sites of Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Rajgir, Nalanda, Sanchi, and Amaravati to the spread of Buddhist philosophy through monks, scholars, universities, and trade networks, Bharat has historically served as the cradle of Buddhist civilisation. The Piprahwa relics occupy a special place within this heritage, representing an invaluable link to the life and legacy of Lord Buddha and attracting devotees, scholars, historians, and tourists from around the world.

Source: NewsOnAir (AIR)

https://newsonair.gov.in

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Launches 'Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar' Initiative

On 17th July 2026, Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah launched the nationwide initiative "Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar" as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in New Delhi. The programme is an initiative of the *Sanskriti Mantralaya* (Ministry of Culture) under the National Mission on Cultural Mapping, with the objective of documenting, preserving, and digitally showcasing the

rich cultural heritage of Bharat's villages. The initiative seeks to create a comprehensive repository of the country's tangible and intangible cultural assets, recognising that the true essence of Bharat's civilisation resides in its diverse rural traditions, customs, folklore, and community practices.

The programme aims to systematically map the unique cultural identity of villages across Bharat by documenting their history, traditional occupations, local art forms, handicrafts, festivals, folk music, folk dances, oral traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, cuisine, architecture, and places of historical or religious significance. By digitally recording these invaluable cultural resources, "Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar" seeks to preserve them for future generations while making them accessible to researchers, students, tourists, policymakers, and the general public.

Bharat's villages have historically served as custodians of the nation's civilisational heritage. They preserve ancient customs, local dialects, ritual practices, agricultural traditions, handloom weaving, pottery, metal crafts, woodwork, storytelling, and numerous performing arts that have been transmitted orally over centuries. Many of these traditions remain vulnerable to rapid urbanisation and changing lifestyles. The initiative therefore represents an important effort to safeguard this priceless cultural wealth by integrating modern digital technology with heritage conservation.

Source: NewsOnAir (AIR)

https://newsonair.gov.in

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Inaugurates 'Museum of Word (Shabdalaya)' – Bharat's First Immersive Language Museum

On 19th July 2026, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah inaugurated "Museum of Word (Shabdalaya)", Bharat's first immersive language museum, at the

Rashtriya Pustakalaya (National Library) in Kolkata, West Bengal. Developed by the *Sanskriti Mantralaya* (Ministry of Culture) with an investment of ₹41 crore, the museum represents a landmark initiative to celebrate, preserve, and promote Bharat's extraordinary linguistic and cultural diversity. Designed as a state-of-the-art immersive museum, Phase I covers an area of 2,282 square metres and houses nine thematic galleries, namely First Word, My Mother Tongue, Navrasa, Journey of Languages, Honouring the Legends, Oral Traditions, Performing Traditions, Global Dialogue, and Public Library Movement. These galleries collectively narrate the remarkable journey of Bharatiya languages from ancient times to the present day through cutting-edge digital and interactive technologies.

The museum showcases nearly 380 languages, including the 121 languages recorded in the Census of 2011, reflecting Bharat's unparalleled linguistic richness. Visitors experience the evolution of languages through immersive audio-visual displays, interactive installations, digital storytelling, and multimedia exhibits that highlight the interconnectedness of language, literature, history, and culture. The museum also honours eminent literary personalities and showcases the contribution of oral traditions, folk narratives, classical literature, theatre, music, and performing arts in preserving Bharat's cultural identity across generations.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Amit Shah emphasised that every young citizen should learn at least one Bharatiya language in addition to their mother tongue, stressing that languages are powerful carriers of culture, values, traditions, and civilisational memory. He observed that linguistic diversity is one of Bharat's greatest strengths and plays a crucial role in fostering national unity while preserving regional identities. His remarks highlighted the importance of multilingualism in strengthening cultural integration and promoting mutual understanding among different linguistic communities.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB) https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2286386

Sanskriti Mantralaya Reports Over 88,800 Manuscripts Preserved on Gyan Bharatam Portal

On 20th July 2026, the *Sanskriti Mantralaya* (Ministry of Culture) informed the Lok Sabha that the Gyan Bharatam Portal currently maintains digital records of more than 88,800 manuscripts, reflecting Bharat's continuing efforts to preserve its vast documentary and intellectual heritage through modern technology. According to the official data presented in Parliament, the portal contains 83,045 paper manuscripts, 5,772 palm-leaf manuscripts, and three birch bark manuscripts, representing an invaluable repository of the country's literary, philosophical, scientific, religious, and historical traditions accumulated over several millennia.

During the parliamentary proceedings, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat explained that these manuscripts belong to different historical periods and that determining their exact age remains a continuous scholarly process requiring detailed research, scientific analysis, and historical verification. The collection encompasses manuscripts written in various Bharatiya languages and scripts, preserving knowledge across diverse disciplines such as Vedic literature, philosophy, Ayurveda, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, music, grammar, law, religion, agriculture, and traditional sciences. These manuscripts constitute one of the world's richest documentary legacies and continue to serve as indispensable sources for researchers and historians.

The preservation of manuscripts is central to protecting Bharat's civilisational heritage, as these documents embody centuries of accumulated wisdom, intellectual inquiry, artistic expression, and cultural continuity. They provide invaluable insights into the country's historical development, social institutions, scientific achievements, literary traditions, and spiritual philosophies.

Source: DD India

https://ddindia.co.in

Bharatiya Puratatva Sarvekshan Undertakes Conservation and Restoration of the Sri Jagannath Temple, Puri

On 20th July 2026, the *Bharatiya Puratatva Sarvekshan* (Archaeological Survey of India – ASI) commenced an extensive repair and conservation programme at the 12th-century Sri Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha, during the annual nine-day ritual period when the presiding deities temporarily reside at the Gundicha Temple following the world-renowned Rath Yatra. This carefully planned restoration work is undertaken during the deities' ceremonial absence to ensure that conservation activities are carried out without disrupting the temple's daily religious rituals and the sentiments of millions of devotees. The initiative reflects ASI's continued commitment to preserving Bharat's invaluable architectural, religious, and cultural heritage for future generations.

The Sri Jagannath Temple, one of the Char Dham pilgrimage sites of Hinduism, is among Bharat's most sacred religious monuments and a remarkable example of Kalinga temple architecture**.** Constructed during the 12th century CE under the reign of King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty, the temple has remained a living centre of faith, devotion, and cultural traditions for over eight centuries. Every year, millions of devotees and pilgrims from Bharat and across the world visit Puri to seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath**,** Lord Balabhadra**,** and Devi Subhadra, making it one of the most significant centres of spiritual tourism and cultural heritage.

The conservation programme includes structural repairs, scientific restoration, stone conservation, and preventive maintenance aimed at safeguarding the temple from natural weathering and the effects of time. Such heritage conservation efforts require specialised archaeological expertise to ensure that the monument's original architectural features, sculptural details, and historical authenticity are preserved without compromising its sacred character. ASI follows internationally accepted conservation principles while respecting the religious traditions associated with the temple.

Source: UNI India

https://uniindia.com

Sanskriti Mantralaya flags off "Somnath Swabhiman Yatra" from Bihar to Commemorate a Millennium of Faith

On 20th July 2026, Sanskriti Mantralaya (Ministry of Culture) launched another significant initiative to celebrate Bharat's spiritual and cultural heritage as Bihar Chief Minister Shri Samrat Choudhary flagged off the 'Somnath Swabhiman Yatra' from Patliputra Junction, Patna. A special train carrying more than 1,100 devotees embarked on a six-day pilgrimage, scheduled to conclude on 26 July 2026, to the sacred Somnath Jyotirlinga in Gujarat. The yatra forms part of the nationwide 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv', commemorating 1,000 years of unwavering faith associated with the Somnath Temple and 75 years since its post-Independence reconstruction in 1951, symbolising the resilience and continuity of Bharat's spiritual civilisation.

The pilgrimage offers devotees an opportunity to participate in a series of religious, spiritual, and cultural activities, including evening aarti, devotional programmes, and visits to the revered Somnath Temple, one of the twelve sacred Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. Somnath occupies a unique place in Bharat's religious consciousness, representing unwavering faith despite repeated historical invasions and destruction. Its reconstruction after Independence became a powerful symbol of national cultural resurgence and the restoration of civilisational pride under the leadership of visionaries such as Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who recognised the temple's profound historical and cultural significance.

According to the official information, nine such yatras have already been successfully flagged off from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, New Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh, demonstrating enthusiastic public participation from across the country. These nationwide pilgrimages strengthen cultural integration by bringing

together devotees from diverse linguistic, regional, and social backgrounds in a shared spiritual journey.

Source: (Ministry of Culture)
https://amritkaal.nic.in/event campaign detail?3032

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