



JICA celebrates World Heritage Week with emphasis on future prosperous of India's tourism sector in post-COVID-19 world

~ Reviving tourism through preservation of rich heritage of India ~

New Delhi, November 19: India is home to 38 World Heritage sites, with 30 cultural sites, 7 natural sites and 1 shared site. With the richness of heritage, comes the responsibility of conservation and preservation of these sites. Therefore, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) celebrated World Heritage Week from November 19 to November 25, to reiterate its commitment towards preserving India's heritage tourism, and to revive the industry, in the pandemic-hit world.

India is known for its historical architecture and rich cultural heritage. JICA has been continuously supporting India in preserving these cultural sites by providing ODA loans, technical cooperation or by sharing Japanese best practices in preserving them.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Katsuo Matsumoto, Chief Representative, JICA India** said, "India has an opulence of cultural sites and attracts tourism basis these sites and now tourism sector is one of the major industries in the country as estimated to contribute approximately 9% to India's GDP. Although novel coronavirus pandemic brought many challenges in the sector, JICA believes that the sector will be growth driver in post-COVID-19 world and, for future prosperous, it is imperative to preserve and conserve the tourism site so as to ensure visitor's satisfaction. JICA has been closely working with India in this regard, by construction or improving the infrastructure and installation of world-class technology to ensure comfort for the tourist. Our cooperation with the Government of India, is a symbol of our long-lasting Indo-Japanese ties. Japan continues to extend its support, as the industry has been massively hit by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic."

In this regard, JICA has provided a grant aid of 3,042 million Japanese Yen (approximately INR 200 crore) for 'the Project for Construction of the International Cooperation and Convention Center in Varanasi' in 2017 and the same (Phase 2) in 2018 which is now under construction and construction phase is entering the final stage towards completion.

The JICA-assisted Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Centre (VCC) named 'Rudraksha' will be base for intellectual and personal exchanges between India and Japan and is expected to be showcase for the cultural and historical significance of Varanasi.

As one of the functions of VCC is to introducing cultural and traditional music and performing arts. Varanasi has historically been the centre of cultural activities, and was nominated as UNESCO's Creative City of Music, therefore the VCC is planned mainly to be a showcase of the traditional music, dance and plays of India.

Therefore, one of the characteristics of VCC facilities is special stage facilities (stage setting and fly system, stage lighting system, stage sound system, audio-visual system) for stage performances. Currently it is under selection process for the promising operator who will be responsible for the operation and maintenance for VCC.



JICA also supported the Ajanta-Ellora Conservation and Tourism Development Project during 1992 to 2014, which aims at preserving the cultural condition of these World Heritage Sites and enhancing tourists' experience. JICA has cumulatively extended an ODA loan of 11,076 million Japanese yen (approximately INR 680 Crore) for the project.

Besides directly funding heritage projects, JICA is also supporting the development of ancillary services in the country i.e. ease of travel through mass rapid transport systems, provision of water through water projects and access to hygiene through sanitation projects in India.

JICA has been closely working with the Government of India to protect and preserve the rich heritage of India through their efforts in the country. JICA's efforts in India have gathered international appreciation.



Ajanta-Ellora Conservation and Tourism Development Project

About JICA

Established by a specific law as an incorporated administrative institution under the Government of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) aims to promote international cooperation as the sole Japanese governmental agency in charge of ODA implementation. JICA is the world's largest bilateral donor agency. JICA works as a bridge between Japan and emerging countries, and provides assistance in the form of loans, grants and technical cooperation, so that the emerging countries can strengthen their capabilities.

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