

XI BRICS CULTURE MINISTERS' MEETING CONCLUDES IN BHOPAL; BHOPAL DECLARATION ADOPTED

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The XI BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting was held in Bhopal today under India's BRICS Chairship and concluded with the adoption of the Bhopal Declaration, providing a practical and forward-looking framework for strengthening cultural cooperation among BRICS Member States and partner countries.



The BRICS Culture Track under India's Chairship progressed through three Culture Working Group meetings. The first meeting was held virtually on 29–30 April 2026, followed by the second meeting in Varanasi on 4–5 June 2026 and the third meeting in Bhopal on 5–6 August 2026. The Ministerial Meeting held today witnessed participation from 14 countries, including India, comprising 10 BRICS Member Countries and 4 Partner Countries. The BRICS Member Countries participating were Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates, with Egypt joining the Ministerial Meeting online. The Partner Countries were Belarus, Cuba, Kazakhstan and Thailand. The Culture Ministers of Indonesia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates also participated in the Ministerial Meeting, reflecting the high-level engagement in the Culture Track. A total of 55 delegates participated in the meetings.

The deliberations were guided by India's overarching BRICS theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability", with emphasis on translating dialogue into practical initiatives and strengthening institutional cooperation in the field of culture.



The Bhopal Declaration, adopted today, advances cooperation in the cultural and creative industries and creative economy, including the exchange of methodologies, experiences and best practices, support for creators, networking and expanded opportunities for market access through digital tools. It also provides for enhanced cooperation on UNESCO multinational nominations, provenance research and the return and restitution of cultural property, including exploration of AI enabled tracing tools; safeguarding Traditional Knowledge Systems and Traditional Cultural Expressions; cooperation among museums, libraries and archives in documentary heritage, digitisation and conservation; and protection of creators' rights, transparency and fair and equitable remuneration in relation to the use of copyrighted works in Artificial Intelligence systems.

As a concrete initiative under the Culture Track, India announced a pilot initiative to develop a Voluntary Artist Registry. The initiative is envisaged to facilitate cultural exchanges, strengthen professional networks and create greater opportunities for artists and creative practitioners across BRICS.

A major cultural component of India's BRICS Chairship was the two-day BRICS Culture Festival held in Bhopal on 6–7 August 2026. The Festival witnessed participation from BRICS Member and Partner Countries, with Belarus, Brazil, Indonesia, Russia and the United Arab Emirates presenting cultural performances showcasing the richness and diversity of their artistic traditions. Centred on the timeless Indian ethos "सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः" — "Harmony and Peace to All" — the Festival provided a vibrant platform for cultural dialogue, artistic exchange and people-to-people connectivity. On the second day, a collective ensemble performance of the theme in the languages of participating BRICS countries symbolised unity through cultural diversity.



The Culture Track also provided an opportunity for bilateral engagement. Bilateral meetings with participating countries were held at the level of the Union Minister of Culture and the Secretary, Ministry of Culture, providing an opportunity to exchange views on strengthening bilateral cultural cooperation and exploring areas of mutual interest.

The programme further offered visiting delegations an opportunity to experience India's rich cultural and civilisational heritage. On 5th August, delegates visited the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), Bhopal. Following the Ministerial Meeting, delegations are being taken to Sanchi today to experience its significant Buddhist heritage. A visit to Bhimbetka is scheduled for the morning of 9th August, offering the participating delegations an opportunity to experience India's prehistoric rock shelters and ancient cultural heritage.



India expressed its appreciation to all participating BRICS Member States and Partner Countries for their constructive engagement and active participation during its Chairship and reaffirmed its commitment to continued cooperation towards a more connected, inclusive and future-ready cultural partnership within BRICS.

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