India wins the Visitors' Lion for Best National Participation at the 61st Venice Art Biennale

La Biennale di Venezia names India's Pavilion the Best National Participation, chosen by the votes of the public

About 4.5 lakh visitors to the India Pavilion over the Biennale's run; among the most visited national pavilions

India's return to Venice after seven years ends with the top honour for the national pavilion

Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi: award sets the stage for The India Biennale in New Delhi from 4 December 2026 to 21 March 2027

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India has won the **Visitors' Lion for Best National Participation** at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (Biennale Arte 2026). The Venice Biennale is widely called the Olympics of the art world. La Biennale di Venezia today announced the winners of the Visitors' Lions on the basis of the preferences expressed by the public.

Commenting on the result, Mr Pietrangelo Buttafuoco, President of La Biennale di Venezia, said the audience had used the Visitors' Award to make real Pablo Picasso's idea that "a painting lives only through the person who looks at it."

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat the Union Minister of Culture said that it is a moment of immense pride for the nation. "This global recognition is a testament to the new age Indian artists and the robust contemporary Indian art scene. It is a celebration of how India's timeless artistic traditions can find powerful contemporary expression and resonate with people across the world. The award will inspire generations of Indian artists to engage with the world with verve and confidence."

Secretary Culture Vivek Aggarwal said on this occasion:
"India's recognition with the prestigious Visitor's Lion at the Venice Biennale is an immense honour and a moment of national pride. It is a powerful affirmation of India's contemporary artistic expressions, deeply rooted in our civilizational ethos and material

traditions, finding resonance with audiences from across the world. India's return to the Venice Biennale after a long hiatus marks a significant moment in our renewed engagement with the global cultural landscape. The Pavilion has been part of global conversations on art since its inauguration, reflected in the overwhelmingly positive reviews, enthusiastic feedback and extraordinary footfall of visitors and art connoisseurs from across the world.This recognition marks an important milestone in India's cultural journey and reaffirms the universal relevance and appeal of our diverse, dynamic and evolving creative expressions."

About the India Pavilion

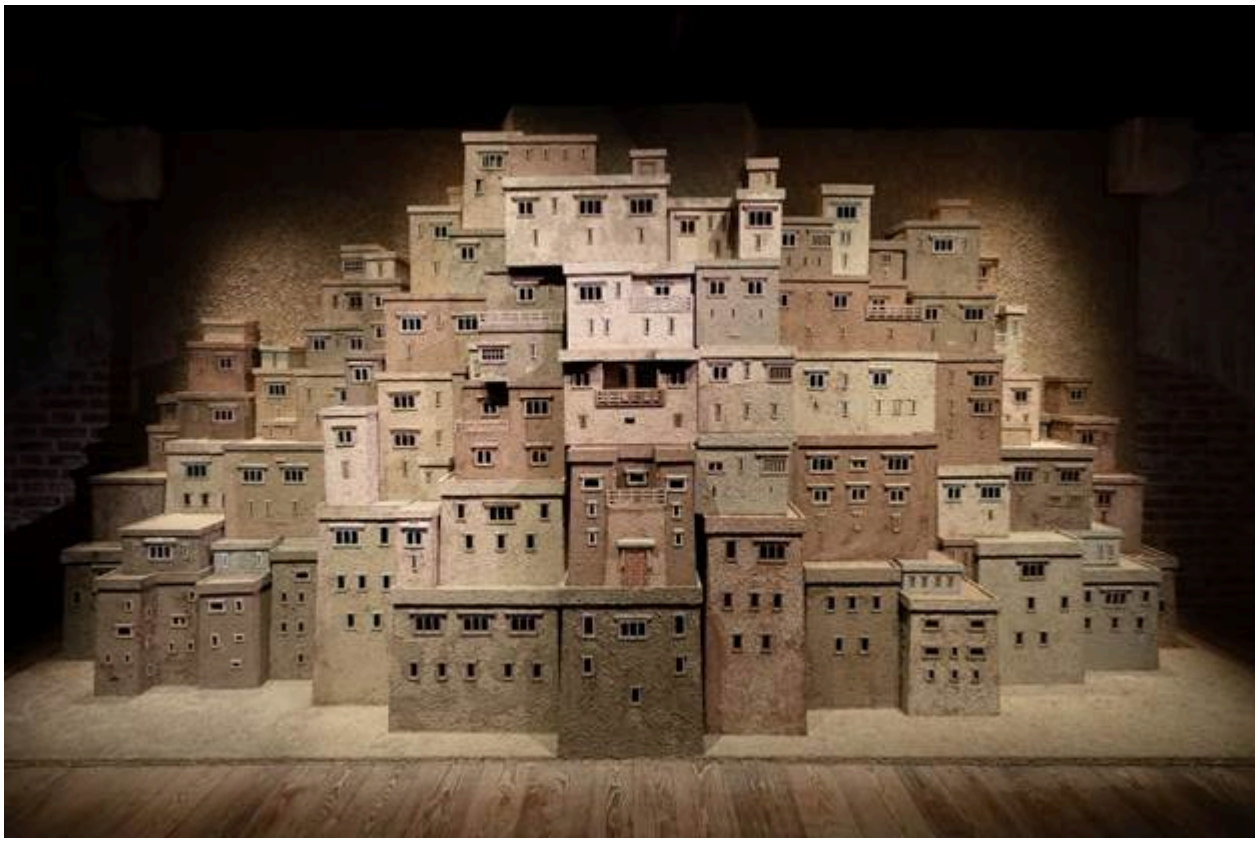
The Ministry of Culture presented the National Pavilion of India in collaboration with the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC) and Serendipity Arts. The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Ministry of Culture, was the Commissioner and IGNCA was the implementing partner for the India Pavilion titled *Geographies of Distance: Remembering Home*. It was housed in the historic Isolotto spaces of the Arsenale di Venezia. Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat inaugurated the Pavilion on 6 May 2026.

The exhibition looks at how, for people whose lives are shaped by change or distance, home becomes less a fixed place and more a state they carry with them, made of memory, material, ritual and personal mythology. It responded to the Biennale's theme, *In Minor Keys*, through the diversity of India's regions, materials and craft practices. At the inauguration, Shri Shekhawat had said the exhibition "presents a contemporary India that is both rooted and forward looking."

Artist	Artwork	Description
Alwar Balasubramaniam (Bala)	*Not Just for Us*	A series of sculptural panels made using clay and soil sourced from rural Tamil Nadu. Featuring natural fissures and fractures, the works capture the passage of time and environmental forces, exploring the relationship between land, memory and transformation.
Ranjani Shettar	*Under the Same Sky*	An intricately crafted suspended sculptural installation inspired by flowers and natural growth. Created through traditional hand-crafted processes, the organic forms create an immersive, garden-like environment, bringing together nature, craftsmanship and the idea of home.

Sumakshi Singh	*Permanent Address*	An immersive, life-size reconstruction of the artist's demolished family home in New Delhi, recreated using delicate embroidered thread. Exploring memory, domestic space and belonging, the installation transforms the idea of home into an enduring emotional and cultural experience.
Skarma Sonam Tashi	*Echoes of Home*	An installation using papier-mâché to explore the traditional architecture and ecological landscape of Ladakh. The work draws attention to the vulnerability of traditional building practices amid changing environmental conditions and modern construction, raising questions of sustainability and cultural continuity.
Asim Waqif	*Chaal*	A large-scale bamboo installation inspired by the visual language of scaffolding across India's urban landscapes. Drawing on a material deeply embedded in vernacular building practices, the work explores urban transformation, renewal and the evolving nature of contemporary cities.





Alongside the visual art exhibition, the India Pavilion featured an extended performance programme curated by Serendipity Arts, activating the Pavilion and cultural spaces across Venice through music, movement, storytelling and interdisciplinary performances throughout the Biennale, from May to November 2026.

Visitors' Favourite in Venice

About 4.5 lakh visitors came to the India Pavilion during the Biennale, making it one of the most visited national pavilions of the edition. Visitors included leading figures from the international art world: museum directors, curators, collectors and critics, as well as well-known personalities from culture and public life.

Alongside the exhibition, Serendipity Arts ran a programme of performances and events across Venice from May to November 2026. It combined visual and performing arts, with interdisciplinary presentations drawn from Indian cultural traditions and the Biennale's theme. The programme took the Pavilion's ideas beyond the Arsenale to audiences across the city.



An extraordinary comeback, and the road ahead

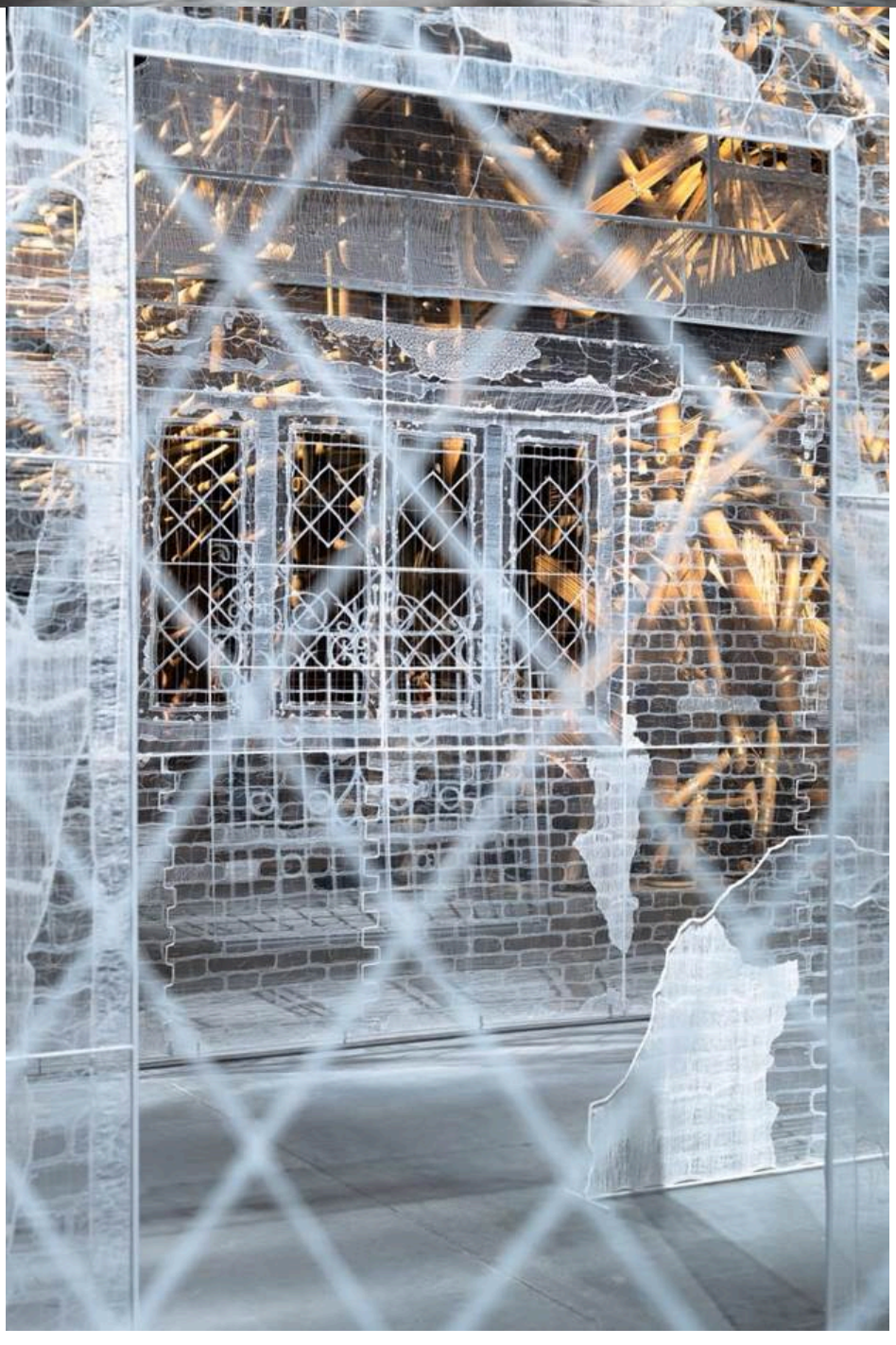
India took part in the Venice Art Biennale in 2026 after a gap of seven years. Winning the top honour for national pavilions on its return marks an extraordinary comeback. It reflects India's growing presence in global contemporary art and in cultural diplomacy.

Continuing with this momentum, the Ministry of Culture will present **The India Biennale** in New Delhi from **4 December 2026 for 108 days**. Its principal venue is Purana Qila, with programming at heritage monuments like Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Jantar Mantar, Safdarjung Tomb, Agrasen ki Baoli and cultural venues across the city. The India Biennale will bring contemporary art, architecture and design into India's historic monuments and will have a dedicated Students Biennale also. The India Biennale is being organized through a unique public private partnership in which the Ministry of Culture provides the shell and core infrastructure and access to venues while the exhibition set up is being done by private participants. The event will offer Indian and international audiences a city-wide celebration of the country's living heritage and creative energy through a unique Biennale Pass, in the spirit of **Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi**.











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