

Relocation of endangered Petroglyphs begins at India's first Petroglyph Conservation Park at Sindhu Ghat in Leh

So far, 31 ancient rock arts relocated and preserved at Park

Leh, June 29: The work on India's first Petroglyph Conservation Park at Sindhu Ghat in Leh, has commenced in full swing, with the systematic and meticulous relocation of petroglyphs (ancient rock art) from vulnerable sites across Ladakh. This marks a historic step towards preserving Ladakh's priceless archaeological and cultural heritage.

Lt. Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, on April 18, on the occasion of World Heritage Day, had laid the foundation stone of the Petroglyph Conservation Park, to serve as a dedicated conservation space for centuries-old rock carvings, that are increasingly threatened by natural weathering, unregulated tourism, infrastructure development, human interference and lack of awareness. The park will house petroglyphs collected from vulnerable and isolated locations across Ladakh, ensuring their preservation for future generations, while also making them accessible to visitors, in a curated and educational setting. The Park is targeted to be completed by September this year.

So far, 31 petroglyphs from Saboo Thang have been relocated to the Petroglyph Conservation Park. These petroglyphs measure from 4 feet to 17 feet in circumference and weigh from 500 KG to 10 MT. The rock carvings predominantly depict distinctive Ladakhi wildlife such as ibex, yak, argali, blue sheep, dogs and other wildlife, along with scenes of hunting, hunters, warriors, footprints and other symbolic representations. The distribution of the carvings also reflects the ecological diversity of Ladakh, with ibex figures commonly found in the lower valleys of Sham and Purig, while yak and argali dominate the higher reaches of Changthang.

The first phase of the conservation works includes the relocation of 155 petroglyphs, including 13 petroglyphs from Phyang Thang, 30 from Stakmo Thang, 28 from Likir Hill, 14 from Likir Thang, 10 from Taru Thang, besides petroglyphs from Thiksey, Igoo, Ganglas, Khaltse, Saspol, Ranbirpur, Nimoo, Spituk, Tsogsti and several other locations. These invaluable artefacts are being carefully shifted and curated at Sindhu Ghat to ensure their long-term preservation, while making them accessible for research, education and public appreciation, through setting up an interpretation Centre.

"The Petroglyph Conservation Park is a historic initiative to preserve Ladakh's priceless archaeological heritage for future generations. By relocating vulnerable petroglyphs to a scientifically managed conservation park, we are protecting an invaluable chapter of India's civilisational legacy from the threats of natural degradation and human activities. This initiative reflects our commitment to preserving Ladakh's unique cultural heritage while creating a world-class centre for heritage education, research and responsible cultural tourism," said L-G Shri Saxena.

Notably, Ladakh is regarded as one of the richest repositories of prehistoric rock arts in South and Central Asia. Spread across an altitude ranging from 2,500 metres to over 5,000 metres, these petroglyphs offer a remarkable visual record of the region's early human history and cultural evolution.

