

RESTORING KERALA'S CULTURAL COLOURS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: United Nations (UNO)

Livelihood worries: Artisans Rajeev and his brother Renjith surveying their flood-hit mirror-making unit at Aranmula in Pathanamthitta district. At right, a damaged handloom unit at Chendamangalam in Ernakulam. LEJU KAMAL & Thulasi Kakkat.

The International Centre for the study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), an intergovernmental organisation with headquarters in Rome, would be salvaging the cultural wealth affected by the recent floods in Kerala. The work is expected to start from October 8.

International agencies will have discussions with the government of Kerala and also with Government of India on the rehabilitation and they are likely to involve the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank in their efforts.

As chief adviser to the government of Kerala for Museums, Dr. M. Velayudhan Nair has been trying to consolidate help from governmental and non-governmental agencies for immediate relief. Dr. Nair, who is also a trustee and council member of the International Institute of Conservation, held discussions with ICCROM in Italy in the first week of September to convince it to help with a disaster management plan for Kerala.

"I had discussions with Aparna Tandon, the head of the department dealing with disaster management in ICCROM and finalised immediate intervention jointly with ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)," said Dr. Nair.

Short-term projects

The team will be arriving in Kerala on Monday and will be visiting the flood-affected site with ideas of short-term and long-term projects for salvage and also for rehabilitation of people like artisans who are sustaining heritage, both in the tangible and intangible forms, he added.

One of the worst-affected places is Aranmula, a heritage village in Pathanamthitta district. It is well known for its rich heritage in the areas of arts, culture, literature, agriculture, traditional practices, temple arts, sculpture, and also for the world-famous metal mirror, popularly known as *Aranmula Kannadi*.

The know-how to make the mirror is limited only to certain families living in Aranmula, but the floods washed away their workshops, moulds, frames and stock of material as well as finished products.

The palliyodam, or snake boat shaped in the *anantha shayanam* pose of Lord Vishnu, is another important part of Aranmula's heritage. There are 52 such boats belonging to 52 villages around Aranmula; they are revered and worshipped by the people. Many of these boats were damaged beyond repair.

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