

'Rooted in its culture, Ayodhya offers something for everyone'

Isha Jain@timesgroup.com

For all those chasing their dream of a permanent housing or of a lifelong association in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Ram, has a lot to offer. Housing commissioner and director, Nagar Bhumi Seema Ropan, Ranvir Prasad, said that Ayodhya is the first city in the country that will see the river (Saryu) water flowing through the planned greenfield township.

Speaking on 'Ayodhya's growth saga and development stories from all ends' at TOI's Divine Ayodhya conclave, Prasad said, "To have a feel of Treta Yug, 30% of the land infrastructure is kept green (trees) and blue (water). This is for the first time when green space is chalked before designing the plot space."

Highlighting the government's efforts to revive the glory of Ayodhya, he said, "At least 178 projects totalling around Rs 30,500 crore are in progress to develop Ayodhya into world-class city. Of this, 65% work is already complete or in different stages of completion."

Beyond greenfield townships, the city will also boast of 10 unique ashrams and mutts where renowned practitioners from different fields will set up their schools.

"Residential plots will be a low-rise housing (at the height of tree) to give a feel of older times. Everything is oversubscribed. And I can say Ayodhya has something for everyone. Ayodhya is going to be a city where people will come back to trace their roots," Prasad said.

Earlier, setting the tone for the session, vice-chancellor, Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Bikaner, Prof Manoj Dixit said the temple

At least 178 projects totalling around ₹30,500 crore are in progress to develop Ayodhya into a world-class city

town of Ayodhya is not a city, or a place to be visited and enjoyed as a tourist destination. Instead, Ayodhya has to be 'felt'.

Stating that a deep understanding of culture and letting it survive is key to Ayodhya's development, Prof Dixit said, "Eight years ago, the footfall in Ayodhya stood at 250, and they were all pilgrims and not tourists. For tourists globally, the attraction to visit an Indian destination is primarily its culture. Failure to witness this culture results in disappointment and there are no repeat tourists."

Proposing a three-pronged activity to ensure repeat tourists in Ayodhya, Prof Dixit said, "Conservation is the first and foremost. Then we need to create an orbit around Ayodhya which will be new and developed one, and third, we need to create a new Ayodhya, a modern one that supplies and understands everything from the city."

Strongly asserting to look up to the Shikoku model (Japan) for development of Ayodhya, Prof Dixit, under whose aegis the first Deepotsav was held in 2017, said: "I have seen Ayodhya's divinity, spirituality and now witnessing its structure. And I feel, there should be a consensus – to preserve, conserve and promote its culture. Because once a

culture of a place, city is lost, tourism or no tourism, the economic potential will be meaningless for India." He added, "Like Shikoku, there can be everything around Ayodhya while it remains as a spiritual centre where people can go and just feel Ayodhya. Because Ayodhya is not Mathura that can be seen. We will have to pay a heavy price if we want to see it."

Prof KS Ranjani from the Indian Institute of Management, Mumbai, shared a fintech solution she worked upon along with Prof U Dinesh Kumar from IIM-Bangalore for the Ram temple. "We did a study to look at the fund collection. We found Rs 3,200 crore was collected during 45 days of the campaign. We created a model while the construction of Ram temple is underway that could integrate cash and digital collections, high and low value transactions, and application development with public sector banks," said Prof Ranjani.

Principal architect of the Ayodhya airport Vipul Varshney took a tour of the high-profile project. "The Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram International airport amalgamates the concept of carbon neutrality with the Nagara style of architecture prevalent in northern India. The airport design doesn't compete with Ram temple, but it complements the temple." She added that the mega columns supporting the terminal roof depict various episodes and characters of the Ramayana. "Each of the murals and artwork is symbolic," she said.

"Ramayan is not a mythology, but history," said producer Naveen Reddy Nukala, who is coming up with a movie titled 'Evidence of Ramayana'.



FOR A WORLD CLASS CITY: Session on Ayodhya's growth saga underway during the conclave