

# 'Gujarat should get a world-class museum'

## Museum Expert Vinod Daniel Was In The City

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**Ahmedabad:** The concept of museums the world over is changing, from a place to keep priceless artefacts to an interpretative space for history and culture. Armed with new technology, more and more museums have strong web and social media presence and interactive displays. Is there a way to look at the state's museums with a different approach?

India-born Vinod Daniel, currently chair of AusHeritage and board member of International Council of Museums (ICOM), who was in the city recently, provided some answers.

"I draw parallels between Gujarat and Singapore. Singapore went through a phase where after rapid industrialization and social change, there was a feeling that they were losing their culture. They soon made a long-term national strategy and transformed the sector. Today they are one of the best in the world. This is the right time for Gujarat to work on long-term strategy," he said.

Daniel added that with such a rich heritage to showcase, he feels a state like Gujarat should take the initiative to develop at least one world-class museum, to set an example for others.

"A museum is a safe place for unsafe ideas. What we need today is to focus on issues such as the need for trained manpower, international collaboration to benefit from expertise and central level policy. We also need to focus on specialization so that museums can complement each other," he said.

Emphasizing on engaging visitors, Daniel gave the example



Vinod Daniel is an Australia-based museologist and conservator

of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai as a proactive institution. "Why can't we have places in museums where we can have a cup of chai? Also, a museum is not just one structure – a heritage property can be a museum. In the Pacific Islands, they have cultural centres where they also include customs and rituals. There is ample scope to do so here," he said.

Daniel has been active in a number of activities in India, ranging from training budding museologists to his charity to provide reading glasses in rural areas. Some of his works include helping set up a cricket collection for Sachin Tendulkar, working on functional brief of Santiniketan and assessing the collections at Chicholi in Maharashtra for an Ambedkar Museum. "I have also been associated in various capacities with projects such as revamping the house of Aung San – the father of Aung San Suu Kyi – in Myanmar and planning for a new Egyptian museum," he said.