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Development of heritage sites on priority list: Govt

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HIMALAYAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU: The government says developing the Pashupatinath and Lumbini heritage sites as per the master plans in the current fiscal year is in its priority list.

The procedures to complete works of both the heritages will be forwarded this year, officials at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation said.

Pashupatinath Temple and Lumbini, birthplace of Gautam Buddha, have been enlisted in the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Despite the government having the master plans to develop both the sites, work has moved at snail's pace.

The Lumbini Master Plan, which was conceived by Kenzo Tange and formulated in 1978, has as its objective to restore an area of about 7.7 square kilometres to be known as the Lumbini Garden. According to the Lumbini Development Trust, the garden will have the Ashoka Pillar in the centre and an additional area of 64.5 square kilometres will be developed as per the master plan.

According to the Pashupati Area Development Trust, the original plan was formulated in 1988. The schemes were amended in 1996 and the government had approved the plan in 1999. The 10-year plan was aimed to conserve the Pashupatinath area, promote its religious and cultural environment and develop its aesthetic and artistic value. The Rs 2.03-billion project could have reported a progress of only about 25 per cent in the first 10 years. According to the MoCTCA, the government has allocated Rs 402 million in the current fiscal for conservation and promotion of the culture and heritage of the country. Only Rs 225 million was allocated in the last fiscal year.

"It is the first time the government has included preparing inventory of cultural ethnicities, races and intangible cultural heritages in the budget and programmes of the current fiscal year," said Jaya Ram Shrestha, chief of the culture and heritage division at the MoCTCA.

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