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A memorial to Kochi's royal past



MEMORIES OF YORE: The portrait of a Kochi Rajah at the gallery in the museum at Mattancherry.

Special Correspondent

KOCHI: The Mattancherry Palace Museum here wears a spruced up look thanks to the initiative of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which has breathed new life into this heritage site.

The palace, which continues to attract visitors and tourists, especially those from foreign countries, was built and presented by the Portuguese to the Raja of Kochi Vira Kerala Varma (1537–1565) around 1555 A.D. Subsequently, the Dutch renovated the palace, hence it is popularly known as the Dutch Palace.

The ASI has converted the original office block now into a portrait gallery displaying the paintings of the Kochi Raja's. In the two adjacent rooms, Kerala history gallery has been organised.

This is a newly organised gallery. Here glass panels are displayed detailing mythological story of Parasuram, geological background, archaeology and history of Kerala in general and Kochi in particular.

Portrait gallery

The portrait gallery of the Kochi kings from 1864 onwards are now displayed in the newly organised gallery. The life size paintings are made on canvas by the local artists. The display is of international standard. Lighting and labels are of world class. LED lightings which will not have any negative impact on the paintings are now provided. Detailed information is given on the kings, his achievements besides giving photographs of family members. Most important paintings displayed include Rama Varma (1805-1809), Veera Kerala Varma (1809-1828), Rama Varma (1790-1805), Rama Varma (1828-1837) etc. In an innovative way, a time line has been provided in front of each portrait on the significant events that had taken place during relevant period all over the world.

A small room at the end of the northern wing has been converted into a museum theatre.

Short films on Indian Culture and Heritage of India are shown.

This marks the Phase-I of the Museum re-organisation work, say P.C. Mathew and Monolita of The Design Combine, who are the consultants to the renovation project.

In the next phase, the eastern wing of the structure will be taken up for systematic conservation and reorganisation of the galleries.

It is proposed to organise socio-economic and cultural history gallery of the Kerala here.

The reception hall of the museum building will also be redesigned during the current year.

In the third phase, the southern wing of the structure and Ramayana gallery will be re-organised.

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