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## Press Release

### **India Heritage Walk Festival 2018 Tracing the rise of literary Chennai, and its roots in Ramayana**

**Chennai, Feb 8:** How many residents of Chennai have passed by a quaint red sandstone building in Nungambakkam full of books stacked from floor to ceiling and known that it is India's oldest library; or shopped at Koyambedu's bustling fruit and vegetable market knowing the ground they are on has a history dating back to the Ramayana?

Reintroducing people of the city to their history and tangible and intangible heritage is the core mission of the nationwide India Heritage Walk Festival which comes to Chennai this weekend.

IHWF 2018, a month-long, multi-city event is organised by Sahapedia ([sahapedia.org](http://sahapedia.org)), an encyclopaedia of Indian arts and culture, and YES Culture, the cultural division of YES Global Institute, a practicing think tank of YES BANK, to celebrate India's rich cultural diversity.

Chennai is hosting two of the IHWF walks for its residents—the first on Saturday, February 10, is in partnership with Breakaway, which specialises in off the map journeys around India and tells the story of the Madras Literary Society (MLS), which, founded in 1818, is India's oldest surviving subscription library.

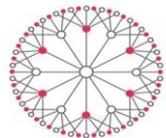
It is led by Rajith Balasubramanian, a heritage enthusiast, storyteller, and the founder of the special interest travel firm The Traveling Gecko. Ranjith will take the participants on a tour of the MLS to take a peek at some of the iconic books in its collection, and introduce them to the motley bunch of volunteers who are helping revive the Society to its former glory.

And on Saturday, February 24, heritage enthusiasts and can explore another slice of history, with some mythology to go with it, in Koyambedu, a crowded suburb synonymous with the wholesale market, the landmark Mofussil Bus Terminus and now the spanking new Metro.

Researcher and blogger Padmapriya Baskaran will be tracing Ramayana in Koyambedu, which was once believed to be a part of Sage Valmiki's ashram where the pregnant Sita took refuge and gave birth to the twins Lava and Kusha. The walk will include visits to the nearby Lavapureeswara and Semathamman temples each of which have several unique facets to them and have many stories to tell.

Details about the walks and other programmes of IHWF 2018, map routes and registration information are available on <http://www.indiaheritagewalkfestival.com>

**Vaibhav Chauhan, Festival Director (IHWF) and Secretary, Sahapedia,** says, 'The India



Heritage Walk Festival 2018 is a celebration of all that Sahapedia stands for. In an attempt to create authentic, credible, and exhaustive content on our rich heritage and culture, we are developing a network of cultural practitioners across the country. This festival is a part of this pan-India movement, making heritage spaces more popular, more accessible, and more experiential. This is exactly why the festival tries to involve people from various walks of life with a range of thematic experiences covered through the walks, and caters to as many people as possible.'

**Rana Kapoor, MD & CEO, YES BANK and Chairman, YES Global Institute**, says "India is blessed with a rich heritage and cultural history, which is abundantly manifested in monuments and architectural sites across our country. Civil society participation in our Nation's heritage, aided by activities such as heritage walks, is integral to the preservation and conservation of these sites. Such heritage tourism initiatives, with the wholehearted participation and involvement of local communities and citizens, have the potential to instill immense national pride and further the agenda of heritage development,"

**Preeti Sinha, Glocal Convenor, YES Global Institute**, says, "The understanding of heritage in 21st century India has expanded from the protection of historic buildings and monuments to focus on more general understanding of the wider context and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural forms. Through active engagement with built, natural and living heritage through the design of walks, talks, and digital media such as films and social forums, the festival is a touchstone for conscious thinking towards formulating historically-sensitive policy and decision making."

IHWF 2018, covering 20 cities and towns around the country, features walks to historical monuments and shrines, well-known landscapes, places known for art and culture, cuisine and flourishing trade.

There is an online film festival of documentaries based on cultural themes and lecture series curated as Baithaks and Instameets as part of nearly 70 events scheduled throughout the month.

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