

Madhya Pradesh Pays Tribute to Rock Art Pioneer Dr. V.S. Wakankar with 'Vakan Dada' Mascot Launch

Unveiled on World Museum Day 2025, the new mascot will serve as the voice of heritage for the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives & Museums, Madhya Pradesh

BHOPAL, MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA, June 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a heartfelt tribute to one of India's most celebrated archaeologists, Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar, the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives & Museums, Madhya Pradesh unveiled its new mascot, Vakan Dada, on the occasion of World Museum Day 2025. The launch ceremony was graced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Mohan Yadav. Vakan Dada, designed as the official storytelling voice of the Directorate, encapsulates the legacy, passion, and scholarly spirit of Dr. Wakankar.



Curtain Raiser of 'Vakan Dada' by Hon'ble CM of Madhya Pradesh, India Dr. Mohan Yadav

Born on 4th May 1919 in Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Wakankar devoted his life to the study and preservation of Indian art, culture, and archaeological heritage. His academic pursuits culminated in a Ph.D. at Deccan College, Pune, under the guidance of the distinguished archaeologist Dr. Sankalia. His thesis, Painted Rock Shelters of India, was published in 2005 by the Directorate and continues to serve as a cornerstone in Indian rock art studies.

Among his most iconic contributions was the discovery of the Bhimbetka rock shelter complex in 1957, a site that now holds UNESCO World Heritage status. His excavation efforts spanned multiple sites across Madhya Pradesh—including Manoti, Indragarh, Kayatha, Dangwada, and Runija—enriching the archaeological narrative of central India.

Dr. Wakankar maintained a deep association with the Directorate of Archaeology and was a passionate advocate for raising public awareness about India's rich archaeological heritage. Over the course of his distinguished career, he authored several books in both Hindi and English and captivated audiences globally through lectures and exhibitions, particularly during his visits to America and Europe. His work received international recognition, and he was conferred the Padma Shri in 1975 by the Government of India.

He also co-authored a seminal book on rock art with American scholar R.R.R. Brooks in 1976, and served as Director of Excavations at Vikram University, Ujjain, mentoring future generations of archaeologists and heritage scholars. He remained a lifetime member of the Indian Archaeological Society and the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies.

In recognition of his enduring contributions, the Government of Madhya Pradesh established the Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Institute of Archaeological Research in 2013. The institute continues to carry forward his mission through active archaeological exploration, rock art documentation, research seminars, and training workshops.

The launch of Vakan Dada represents more than a symbolic gesture—it is a dynamic initiative by the Directorate to make the stories of the past accessible and engaging for contemporary audiences. As the new face and narrator of the Directorate's campaigns, Vakan Dada will help bridge the gap between scholarly research and public engagement, inspiring a new generation to value, explore, and preserve India's archaeological heritage.



Unveiling of 'Vakan Dada' Mascot in Presence of Commissioner Ms. Urmila Shukla (IAS) and Joint Director Dr. Manisha Sharma



Launch Attended by Principal Secretary Mr. Sheo Shekhar Shukla and Dignitaries from the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives & Museums

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