

PARLIAMENTARY TRAVEL REPORT

INDIA

30 May 2025 – 14 June 2025

(Electorate Business)

Lee Tarlamis OAM MP
Government Whip in the Legislative Council
Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Itinerary - Base Cities

New Delhi
Varanasi
Amritsar
Thiruvananthapuram
Kannur
Hyderabad
Vijayawada
Bengaluru
New Delhi

Reason for Travel: Electorate Business to strengthen ties between India, Victoria and the South Eastern Metropolitan Region which has one of the largest Indian diasporas in Victoria and significant economic interests with a focus on education and trade.

Member objectives: Given the vibrant South Eastern suburbs that I represent and their significant strategic, cultural and economic ties, this trip was an opportunity to deepen my understanding of our two nations and further understand opportunities that may exist to expand collaboration between the South Eastern Metropolitan Region and India.

Deep Cultural Resonance in the South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Victoria's relationship with India continues to grow in strategic, economic, cultural, and diplomatic significance.

Through strengthened ties in trade, investment, education, and cultural exchange, the Victoria–India partnership has become a cornerstone of the state's international engagement.

Victoria proudly embraces the culture, knowledge, and prosperity brought by the Indian community; now one of the largest and most vibrant in the state. Nowhere is this more evident than in the South Eastern Metropolitan Region, which has one of the largest Indian community in the State.

Their presence is felt across local businesses, festivals, places of worship, and community organisations, contributing richly to the region's diversity and vitality.

The South Eastern Metropolitan Region is home to Victoria's first Indian cultural precinct, Little India, Dandenong, as well as many places of worship representing the four major Indian religions, hundreds of Indian restaurants and cultural shops, and a multilingual community speaking more than 17 Indian languages and dialects. The region actively celebrates key cultural and religious events and festivals such as Diwali and Holi.

The Indian community maintains a strong and meaningful connection to the South Eastern Metropolitan Region, supported by inclusive and community-focused initiatives such as the Anti-Racism Taskforce, the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Regional Advisory Councils, and the Multifaith Advisory Group. These structures ensure that the voices of Indian Australians are heard and valued, while reinforcing the region's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

My visits to India have been aimed at better connecting with the Indian diaspora in the region that I represent and spent a great deal of time, gaining a better understanding of the shared values and interests between Victoria and India as well as strengthening our bilateral ties and exploring potential business opportunities

ASTRALAYA – the Australia India Business and Culture Council, a not-for-profit organisation – has played a key role in facilitating high-level engagements with state government representatives, businesses, trade bodies to deepen the ties between Victoria and India.

This marks the third delegation trip that ASTRALAYA has actively supported, further strengthening its commitment to fostering bilateral collaboration across culture, commerce, and investment.

It's through such bridging initiatives that we can truly realise the potential of a symbiotic relationship, bringing the rich tapestry of culture and the dynamism of business from both Victoria and India onto a shared platform of growth and mutual respect.

These areas still hold substantial untapped potential for growth and deeper cooperation.

The Evolving Trade Relationship between Victoria and India

India is one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world, with its expanding working (class) it offers a vast array of opportunities for Victorian business. With trade relations growing every day, Victoria has seen immense growth, supported through mutual interests and strategic collaborations.

Trade Overview:

- Our relationship with India is closer and more important than ever.

- India is the fifth largest and fastest growing major economy.
- India is Australia's seventh-largest trading partner and fifth largest export market.
- In the calendar year 2023, the two way-trading ended with a total of \$49 billion.
- India's growth creates opportunities for Australia's goods and services, including agricultural products, minerals, resources, education and skills training. It also affords new two-way investment pathways, such as renewable energy.

Underlying Drivers:

The Victorian Government is committed to liberalising and broadening trade ties with India, the basis of the ever-growing and flourishing trading association.

Key Exports and Imports:

The launch of the air freight route between Melbourne and Mumbai is a clear demonstration of Victoria's ongoing investment in strengthening economic ties with India. This crucial connection supports the efficient transport of perishable goods, such as seafood, dairy, fruits, and vegetables, from India to Victoria, opening new trade and revenue opportunities for both regions.

Victoria and India share a dynamic and evolving trade relationship, reinforced by high-level meetings and policy dialogues during recent delegations. This relationship is further supported by national initiatives such as the New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India, which outlines a long-term vision for deepening economic collaboration, and the annual \$3.8 million investment in the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund, which fosters cutting-edge innovation and joint research.

As we move forward, it remains essential to build on these foundations, advancing strategic partnerships that deliver lasting benefits and mutual prosperity for both Victoria and India.

Strengthening Bilateral Ties:

Victoria has significantly deepened its bilateral relationship with India by prioritising key areas such as trade, investment, and tourism. This strategic engagement has led to the development of robust economic linkages, fostering mutual growth and prosperity. Through increased collaboration in business, the facilitation of investment opportunities, and the promotion of two-way tourism, Victoria and India have cultivated a dynamic and enduring economic partnership that continues to evolve and strengthen over time.

Focus on Education:

Education holds an especially strong link between Victoria and India, with Indian students making up the third-largest source of international students state-wide.

There are already a number of partnerships between India and Victoria through educational institutions, Universities and TAFE's, in my electorate and across the state.

Spotlighted in Victoria's international education strategy, Victoria recognises the contribution and relationship that India influences in the state.

Investment Initiatives:

- New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India.
- Investing \$3.8 million each year to continue the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund.

Strategic Partnerships and Discussions:

During this trip, meetings and discussions were conducted with business representatives and government officials centred around potential avenues of mutual growth and opportunities for both Victoria and India.

This trip has been important in laying the foundation for future collaborations, investments, and strengthening of ties between Victoria and India.

The seeds sown during meetings and discussions hold the promise of blooming into thriving ventures that can benefit both regions immensely.

I remain committed to championing these initiatives for the betterment of our South-Eastern Metropolitan community and Victoria at large.

Upcoming Business Conferences and Sporting Events in Victoria:

During our trip, we took the opportunity to promote the following important business conferences and sporting events that will be held in Victoria:

World Chambers Congress 2025, Melbourne 2-4 September 2025

World Chambers Congress (WCC) is the largest and only international forum that brings leaders and professionals to share best practices, exchange insights, develop networks and address the latest business issues.

Melbourne is immensely proud to host the 14th edition from **2-4 September 2025** with the theme is “Business, chambers, government: Partners for prosperity”.

Past editions have been attended by 1,000+ businesses, chambers and political leaders from 100+ countries.

In addition to the conference, the program will include b2b meetings, site visits, networking receptions, cultural and sporting experiences.

AusBiotech International Conference 2025, Melbourne 21-24 October 2025

Australia’s leading life science conference held in Melbourne this year will bring in industry leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs and researchers from all over the world.

It is the biggest week in biotech and life sciences celebrating groundbreaking research to advanced medical technologies and therapies.

Also, a platform to showcase innovation, forge international partnerships, and shape the future of life sciences.

The program will include insightful sessions with industry experts, networking opportunities, business matching sessions and an exhibition showcasing key organisations and partners.

Sporting Events:

- T20 Cricket – Australia/India at the MCG - **31 October 2025** <https://www.cricket.com.au/matches/series>
- Men’s Australian Open Golf - **4-7 December 2025** <https://www.golf.org.au/ausopen/info/>
- Australian Open Tennis - **12 January – 1 February 2026** <https://ausopen.com/articles/news/australian-open-2026-dates-announced>
- Australian F1 Grand Prix - **12-15 March 2026** <https://www.grandprix.com.au/>

Summary and Recommendations

This trip has been central to my understanding of India and its people. It has presented many opportunities for collaboration, investments, study and exchange that aim to strengthen the ties between our two nations.

Since my return I have already seen the benefits of this trip to my role as the Member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region with a particular focus on education, trade and health most prominently benefiting from this delegation.

The Honourable Smt. Veena George, Minister for Health, Women and Child Welfare has visited the Parliament of Victoria at our invitation, where she toured the Parliament, attended Question Time and learnt more about

our parliamentary systems. During the visit she had the opportunity to meet with Ministers and Members of Parliament. She also toured the Royal Women's Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

I have connected with faith and cultural organisations who have a presence in India and Victoria, including in my electorate.

Government Officials and businesses we met with are exploring the opportunity to attend conferences and sporting events in Melbourne.

I am committed to unlocking these opportunities for the people, economy and communities of the South Eastern Metropolitan Region and facilitating a stronger relationship between Victoria and India.

Summary of Meetings and Visits

Swarved Mahamandir Dham, Varanasi

<https://www.swarved-mahamandir.org/>

Swarved Mahamandir or 'The Temple of Spirituality' is dedicated to Swarveda, a unique Spiritual Scripture which provides unmatched resonance and energy to humanity, for their moral and spiritual growth. It aims to illuminate humankind by establishing peace, harmony and love whilst strengthening the spiritual awakening of society with its spiritual aura and engulf the world in a state of peaceful alertness.

The foundation of the Mahamandir, the Swarveda, is a divine spiritual scripture written by His Holiness, Sadguru Shri Sadafal Deoji Maharaj – an eternal Yogi and Founder of Vihangam Yoga.

It is the world's largest meditation centre, with an impressive seven story structure spanning more than 300 000 square feet. It features a beautiful design of 125-petal lotus domes and has an impressive 20,000-seating capacity. It's architecture features teakwood ceilings, doors with intricate carvings including the verses of the Swarveda.

An amalgamation of ancient philosophy, spirituality and modern architecture, the Swarved Mahamandir will be a historic site for many generations to come where 20,000 people can sit together and meditate.

It was inaugurated by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on 17 December 2023.

Educational Facility, Varanasi

Swarved Mahamandir Trust (SMT) runs a Vedic Gurukulam - "Sadguru Sadafaldeo Aapth Vedic Gurukulam" - supporting up to 1,200 students from regional villages and cities by providing free education through two schools.

In addition to covering all educational costs, the organisation also offers daily meals, learning materials, and other essential amenities at no charge. Boarding facilities are available for students who require them. I had the opportunity during my visit to tour one of these facilities.

Each year, SMT conducts a large-scale distribution of educational resources, including school bags, pencils, erasers, and other basic supplies, to assist children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

To further promote learning, SMT also establishes mini libraries, ensuring students in remote and regional areas have access to a broad range of books to support their educational development.

Gaushalas managed by the Swarved Mahamandir Trust (SMT), Varanasi

The rearing and protection of cows are part of the activities of the SMT.

Serving cows - 'Gau Mata' is a service deeply ingrained in SMT traditions. SMT rear over 1,000 cows across 28 Gaushalas, all of a local Indian breed. 90% of the milk produced in these Gaushalas is donated to pregnant women, or those who have infants.

I had the opportunity to visit one of their Gaushalas during my visit.

Mulagandhakuti Vihara - Sarnath Buddhist Temple, Sarnath, Varanasi

<https://www.incredibleindia.gov.in/en/uttar-pradesh/varanasi/sarnath>

This Buddhist Temple stands as a symbol of the serene and enlightening journey of Lord Buddha.

Sarnath, located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, is a place of immense historical and spiritual significance. It is here that the Buddha delivered his first sermon, marking the beginning of a transformative journey in human thought and philosophy.

Recognised as one of the four sacred sites in Buddhism and often regarded as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sarnath stands as a timeless symbol of peace, wisdom, and the enduring impact of the Buddha's teachings on humanity.

A visit to this temple allows you to step back in time and experience the profound impact of Lord Buddha's teachings and gain a deeper understanding of Buddhism. Its atmosphere is filled with a sense of tranquillity and spirituality, making it an ideal place for meditation and introspection.

The insides are completely dominated by fresco-covered walls depicting scenes from Buddha's life which provide insights for anyone wanting to learn more about the life and journey of the Buddha, from his birth to enlightenment.

This temple serves as a beacon of peace and meditation, drawing Buddhists and spiritual seekers from across the globe and is considered one of the four sacred sites of Buddhism.

It was built in 1931 with donations from various countries and the international Buddhist community and it is said that the consecration drew devotees from all over the world to witness and seek blessings.

Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi

<https://www.shrikashivishwanath.org/>

The Kashi Vishwanath Temple stands on the west bank of the Ganges River and is dedicated to Lord Shiva, who has been worshipped here for hundreds of years as Vishwanatha or Vishweshwara, "Lord of the Universe."

The Temple is among the most important Hindu temples in India and is one of the 12 temples where Lord Shiva is believed to have appeared as a column of light.

The columns, beams, and walls of the temple are decorated with finely carved ornamentation.

According to Hinduism, visiting the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and bathing in the Ganges are important stages on the path to liberation, or moksha.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims visit the temple daily and every year during Mahashivaratri, a great procession takes place from the Mahamrityunjaya Temple to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

It was a deeply meaningful and memorable experience to receive darshan and blessings during my visit.

BAPS Delhi Akshardham & Meeting with Gnanmunidas Swami (GM Swami), New Delhi

<https://akshardham.com/>

The Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gnanmunidas Swami (New Delhi) stands as a Hindu Temple, hailed as an eternal place of worship, and a centre of spiritual and cultural campus of learning and enrichment. It renders the timeless teachings and abundant culture of Hinduism through intricately carved sandstone and marble and designs of history and faith.

The temple is a humble dedication to the Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the revered figures of Hinduism; this structure was inaugurated on 6 November 2005 with the blessings of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj and through the devoted efforts of skilled artisans and volunteers. This included more than 300,000,000 volunteer hours from over 8,000 volunteers from across the world who contributed to its construction

During our captivating tour of the 70-acre facility, we were able to pay our respects to Swaminarayan and experience the dedication to spiritual stalwarts of the ingrained culture of Hinduism.

We also attended The Sahaj Anand Water Show, a breathtaking water show depicting the story from the Kena Upanishad which transported attendees to the land of the dead where they witness the fearless Nachiketa confront Yama, the God of Death, and ultimately receive from him the knowledge of immortality and eternal happiness.

BAPS in Victoria has a Sanstha (Temple) in my electorate of Cranbourne, who assisted with facilitating this visit. They also recently announced plans to build an Akshardham in the South East which when complete will be the largest in the Asia Pacific region.

Sri Harmadir Sahib 'Golden Temple', Amritsar

<https://www.goldentempleamritsar.org/>

Sri Harmadir Sahib, also known as Sri Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple, is the holiest shrine in Sikhism, and a symbol of human brotherhood, equality and humility. Its name comes from the gold-plated sanctum that reflects beautifully in the surrounding Amrit Sarovar (Pool of Nectar).

Founded by Guru Ram Das in 1577 and completed in 1604, it reflects the distinct identity, heritage, and glory of the Sikh faith.

Open to all, regardless of caste, creed, race, or religion, it embodies the inclusive values of Sikhism and offers spiritual solace without discrimination. At its heart lies the Sikh holy scripture in gold, promoting devotion to God and universal harmony.

The temple also houses the world's largest free community kitchen, known as a Langar, which serves over 100,000 people daily. Run entirely by volunteers, it embodies Sikh principles of seva (selfless service) and equality through every part of the temple.

More than a religious site, the Golden Temple stands as a living symbol of peace, service, and spiritual resilience.

Temple devotee and Administration Officer Jatinder Pal Singh graciously provided a breathtaking tour of the temple, highlighting its history and significance and imparting a greater understanding of Sikhism.

The Honourable Mohammad Riyas, Minister for Tourism and Public Work, Thiruvananthapuram Government of Kerala

<https://minister-pwd.kerala.gov.in/>

The Kerala Government's Department of Tourism is a significant government Ministry that oversees and controls tourism in Kerala.

Kerala Tourism is the nation's fastest-growing State Department, and the Ministry has frequently been cited as a crucial division that worked assiduously to elevate Kerala Tourism to the status of one of the Top 100 Super brands.

Victoria is the home for most Malayalees in Australia with a large proportion of them being in the healthcare sector, including as nurses and midwives.

This was a follow-up on previous meetings where we discussed opportunities to advance the two-way travel between Kerala and Victoria. Interest has been expressed in exploring possibilities like setting up a Tourism Club to promote tourism and business relationship between Kerala and Victoria.

Dr N. Khrishna Kumar, Hon. Secretary of Kerala Legislative Assembly,

Shri Muhammaddi P, Additional Private Secretary to the Speaker

T. Manoharan Nair, Private Secretary to the Speaker

Q & A Session & Tour of Kerala Legislative Assembly

<http://www.niyamasabha.org/>

Kerala, located on the southwestern coast of India, is renowned for its high literacy rates, vibrant cultural traditions, and strong social indicators. With a population of over 35 million people, it is one of India's most densely populated states and is often celebrated for its progressive governance and robust public health and education systems.

The state operates under a unicameral parliamentary system known as the Kerala Legislative Assembly, also known as the Kerala Niyamasabha. The Assembly was first established in 1957 following the reorganisation of Kerala's previous regions, originally with 127 members. Now it consists of 140 elected members who represent single-member constituencies across the state's 14 districts, alongside one nominated member from the Anglo-Indian community (a provision that is now discontinued at the national level, and in Kerala since 2021, but historically significant).

Kerala's political landscape is dynamic, with power alternating between two major coalitions. Its democratic institutions are complemented by a politically aware and engaged population, underpinned by Kerala's long-standing traditions of public discourse, cooperative movements, and civic participation.

We engaged in an informative discussion and Q & A session about the workings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly highlighting both the similarities and differences between the operation of our respective Parliaments.

We also had the opportunity to tour the Parliament, including the amazing Parliament Chamber.

The Honourable Smt. Veena George, Minister for Health, Women and Child Welfare
Dr Rajan Khobragade, Chief Secretary Health and Family Welfare
Government of Kerala
<https://minister-health.kerala.gov.in/>

The Minister graciously met with us in her office accompanied by her Chief Secretary to discuss a range of matters including women's representation, their success in combating e-cigarette use, early detection and screening rates for cancer and public health system access and other initiative the Government of Kerala are implementing.

The meeting included comparisons discussions with our relevant jurisdictions and our funding and decision-making powers held by the state and federal Ministers.

We also discussed areas where there were opportunities for greater collaboration between Kerala and Victoria and we invited the Minister to visit the Parliament of Victoria and meet with counterparts during her visit.

Sree Narayana Dharma Sanghom, Varkala
Tree Planting on International Environment Day
<https://sivagiri.com/news/213>

Sree Narayana Dharma Sanghom Trust, Sivagiri Mutt, Varkala, is a revered spiritual order of saints and sanyasins established in 1928 by Sree Narayana Gurudev – one of the greatest saints and social reformers of 19th-century India.

Gurudev is revered by millions across India and abroad as a prophet of peace, justice, and enlightenment, whose life and teachings continue to inspire hope among the oppressed and marginalised.

The core mission of the Mutt is to spread and uphold the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, including the profound message of "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man."

The Trust is committed to serving humanity in line with the Guru's vision and preserving the monastic order to carry forward the ideals of the Sanghom.

Our time spent visiting this spiritual place was a deeply meaningful experience.

On 5th June 2025, in celebration of World Environment Day, we planted a Plavu (jackfruit) tree near the sacred Parnasala of the Mutt.

His Holiness, H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Head of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church)
Tour of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam
<https://mosc.in/holysynod/his-holiness-baselios-marthoma-mathews-iii/>

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, also known as the Indian Orthodox Church, is an ancient Christian denomination founded in 52 A.D. by St. Thomas the Apostle. Based mainly in Kerala, it is part of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and follows Miaphysitism, emphasizing sacraments, traditional liturgy, apostolic succession, community worship, the Holy Qurbana, and deep spiritual practices.

The Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, founded in 1815 by Ramban Ittoop, is the first Orthodox Christian theological school in Asia. It was established to train clergy and provide theological education for the Malankara Church. The seminary chapel houses the tomb of Geevarghese Dionysius of Vattasseril, a revered bishop and the 15th Malankara Metropolitan.

Over time, the seminary has become a key institution in both the Church's religious life and Kerala's socio-political history, and it now seeks to extend its influence across Central and North India.

His Holiness, H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, The Ninth Catholicos of the East in Malankara, delivered prayers and thanks for our leadership in supporting the community of the faithful in our respective constituencies and offered his support for our efforts in reconciling our nation of our past injustices towards the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Following a detailed discussion, we had the opportunity to tour the Theological Seminary including their chapel.

There is a direct connection to my electorate with their St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, Malankara Gregorian Pilgrim Centre located in my electorate in Clayton South.

The Honourable A N Shamseer, Speaker of Kerala Legislative Assembly, Kannur Government of Kerala

<http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/speaker.htm>

The Honourable Speaker of the Kerala Legislative Assembly A N Shameer hosted us for a general discussion on respective Parliaments, Parliamentary procedures and hopes and aspirations for our respective communities in his constituency of Kannur and more broadly in Kerala.

The Speaker spoke of his great affinity with Victoria and of his recent brief visit, where I had the opportunity to meet him for the first time.

He was most proud of his government's investment in the health and wellbeing of his community in the cancer hospital established to serve the most vulnerable in the community.

He completed his remarks with a commitment to seek to visit Victoria again to further explore opportunities for collaboration between Kerala and Victoria and we extended an invitation to visit the Parliament of Victoria.

The Speaker honoured us with a cultural immersion experience where we had the opportunity to visit some important sights and events in Kannur, including:

- Overbury's Folly Seaside Park & Watch Tower
- Dr Hermann Gundert Museum
- Traditional Kerala Lunch
- Odathil Juma Mosque
- Traditional Martial Arts (Kalaripayattu) Performance

Karthik Panigrahi, IAS Officer, Judiciary and District Collector, Kannur

Meeting to gain an understanding of the role of an IAS Officer and Judiciary and District Collector and its connection and significance to the community for services and economic development.

Visit Malabar Cancer Centre (PGIOSR), Kannur

<https://www.mcc.kerala.gov.in/>

Malabar Cancer Centre, located in Kodyeri, Thalassery in Kannur District, Kerala, was established in 2001 and serves as a premier regional cancer centre dedicated to providing comprehensive oncology care to the population of Northern Kerala, as well as extending its services to parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Mahe (Puducherry UT).

Recognised by the Kerala University of Health Sciences and Kannur University, the institution plays a pivotal role in cancer treatment, education, and research.

With a strong commitment to accessibility, the Centre ensures that a majority of patients, up to 96%, receive free or subsidised treatment through government schemes and institutional support.

In addition to clinical care, the Centre also offers support services such as free meals and dormitory facilities for patients and their families.

Through its integrated approach and compassionate care, the Centre stands as a leading institution in the fight against cancer, offering hope and healing to thousands across the region.

We had the opportunity to tour the facility alongside the Speaker of the Kerala Legislative Assembly and meet with Senior Clinicians.

Dr. B. Chennakesava Rao, Director of Advancement and Dean Administration

Vignana Jyothi, Manager

Dr Kiran Chakravarthula

VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology

<https://vnrvjiet.ac.in/>

Representatives from the Institute briefed us on their Institution and presented their ideas to enhance the student experience for their students by exploring opportunities to develop student placements or exchange opportunities in Victoria.

They provided information on the credentials of their institute and acknowledgments they have received, and we articulated Victoria's vision where we welcome and encourage international student placements and exchange.

Official Welcome Event in Town Square hosted by CH Malla Reddy MP, Telangana

Mr CH Malla Reddy MLA from Kessara Gutta hosted us for a welcome reception in the town square and made offerings to wish us well on our journey and time in India.

The ceremony included a vibrant street procession, wreath laying and speeches with many locals in attendance to warmly welcome us.

It was an opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions of our Indian diaspora and reinforce the strong and growing bonds between Victoria and India.

Keesaragutta Sri Rama Lingeshwara Swamy Temple, Telangana

<https://medchal-malkajgiri.telangana.gov.in/tourist-place/keesaragutta-temple/>

Keesaragutta Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is located in Keesara Village roughly 30 km from central Hyderabad.

The temple draws around 300,000 devotees for the Maha Shivaratri festival, as well as during the month of Kartika on the Hindu calendar.

On top of one of the rock-cut caves around the temple, an early Telugu inscription, read as 'Thalachuvanru', was found and dated back to the 5th century CE and it is the earliest known Telugu inscription in the Telangana state.

During our visit we received blessings from the Temple Swamy to bestow good wishes, safe travels to our delegation during our time in India.

Malla Reddy University, Telangana

<https://www.mallareddyuniversity.ac.in/>

Prof. V.S.K. Reddy (Vice Chancellor) & other faculty Members

Discussion & Tour of the Campus

We had the opportunity to learn more about the University including the breadth of courses offered, their academic achievements and the industries they have partnered with for placement of their graduates.

They spoke of their aspirations for courses that deliver on the high number of graduates required to build the India of the future and that included enhancing the uptake of women in male dominated courses and the ultimate graduation rate of women in these courses.

Industry demands on the university are consistent with their approach and they are seeing great student uptake of their bespoke women's courses.

We toured the large University campus which includes accommodation facilities for students. The University has endeavoured to respond to the historically low rates of women graduating from Engineering courses through their innovative women only course delivery and women only accommodation.

They also have a number of international exchange programs which they are seeking to grow and expand into other locations, like Victoria.

AP Drone Corporation
Praveen Kumar Perecharla,
Consultant and advisor

I received a briefing on Andhra Pradesh Drone Policy 4.0 (2024–2029), which is an initiative by the state government aimed at transforming Andhra Pradesh into a national and global hub for drone technology.

Anchored by the development of a 300-acre Drone City in Orvakal, the policy focuses on promoting innovation, attracting investments and creating 40,000 jobs.

With provisions for financial incentives, skill development through training of 25,000 certified drone pilots, and institutional support via the Andhra Pradesh Drone Corporation and Drone Development Centre, the policy encourages integration of drone applications across sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, logistics, and public safety.

Drone Policy 4.0 reflects Andhra Pradesh's commitment to harnessing emerging technologies for economic growth and public benefit while taking advantage of the opportunities but also putting in place measures to mitigate challenges.

Here is a link to some information about Drone Policy 4.0: <https://apdti.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/AP-Drone-Policy-4.0-2024-29-G.O.Ms.-No.-18-dt.-19-11-2024.pdf>

Ugandhar Reddy Yalamuru, Director Business Development, Planet Sigma, Vijayawada
<https://planetsigma.com/>

Planet Sigma are designers and developers of electronic products and are based in Hyderabad.

They briefed us on their national agenda for the implementation of drone technology into industry areas including transport and logistics and the environment. We were introduced to the opportunities for the use of drone technology in mapping and monitoring parks, invasive species and natural disasters including flooding.

Planet Sigma is also exploring regulatory challenges for the expansion of drone use including civil aviation safety law and skills and training requirements for drone operators, which are similarly being considered in Australian regulatory environments.

They expressed an interest in exploring possible manufacturing opportunities in Victoria.

Manda Krishna Madiga – Indian Politician, Activist and recipient of the Padma Shri 'Lotus Honour', Vijayawada

We experienced the fortune of a brief meeting with highly respected Manda Kishna Madiga, a revered leader whose life work has been to advocate for opportunities and development of the most vulnerable members of the Indian community.

We heard from him about his ambitions for the poor and needy and his life's works that lead to his Lotus honour.

He received this honour on the eve of the 76th India Republic Day in 2025.

K. Chandra Sekhar, UV Power, Vijayawada

UV Power is certified to design PV systems and has a background in installing solar systems of Mega watt range in the industrial sector.

They have experience in designing, developing and supplying several solar products which are useful for the construction sector, which are found to be cost efficient, economical, maintenance free and environment friendly.

They assist their customers to cut down their operational expenses through proper energy audits and suggesting the correct usage of renewable green energy sources.

They are interested in exploring options to expand their operations in Victoria.

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam Hindu Temple, Vijayawada

[Durga malleshwara varla devastanam](http://Durga.malleswara.varla.devasthanam)

This Temple is a sacred place of worship dedicated to Goddess Durga, a powerful and revered deity in Hinduism known for strength, protection, and fierce compassion. The temple plays a vital role in the spiritual life of devotees, offering a space for religious rituals, prayers, and traditional festivals centred around Durga worship.

Beyond its religious function, the temple also serves as a cultural hub for the Hindu community, preserving and promoting Hindu traditions, values, and practices. As part of the broader framework of Hinduism – a major world religion with diverse deities and customs – the temple brings people together in devotion and community celebration. Through its religious services and cultural activities, the Temple fosters a strong sense of identity, continuity, and spiritual connection among its followers, making it both a sanctuary of faith and a centre of cultural heritage.

During our visit, we received a Darshan blessing. Darshan refers to the experience of beholding a deity, a revered person or a sacred object. A reciprocal interaction where the viewer is seen by the divine and receives grace or a blessing. It is considered a form of worship and a means of spiritual fulfillment.

Caring with Colour

<https://www.caringwithcolour.org/>

Rajeev Annaluru, Trustee & Chief Operating Officer

Dr. D. R. Prasanna Kumar, Government Relations & Partnerships Lead

Saeed Mansoori, Partnerships & Strategic Alliances

Caring with Colour is an Education NGO based in Bengaluru.

We were briefed on their efforts to reform the curriculum and education outcomes for the students engaged in public education.

This included detailed statistical information about the number of students in India at primary, secondary and tertiary education including that over 250 million people are currently enrolled in education and that there are millions of teachers across India further highlighting the difficulty of the challenge of structural reform to Indian education.

They have engaged in some analysis of the curriculum in Australian jurisdictions but don't have detailed access to all the information required to properly consider elements that could be incorporated in the redesigning of future curriculums.

They are interested in collaborations with Victoria and other jurisdictions in Australia to explore and enhance educational outcomes, including opportunities to work with Australian Universities.

Social Enterprise (Cauvery Karnataka State Arts & Crafts Emporium)

<https://cauverycrafts.com/>

The State of Karnataka has established a social enterprise in Bangalore to encourage small traders to access economic opportunities in the state capital.

The social enterprise supports artisans and craftspeople from across the state including regional and rural areas with a particular focus on women lead businesses and the practice of sandalwood carvery.

Carvery especially acquires artworks that support artists and promote the continuation of art, culture and craft skills from the region.

The store has been recognised for its efforts through a range of awards and recognition by commerce and trade associations.

National Parliament of India

<https://www.india.gov.in/my-government/indian-parliament>

Kh. Ginlal Chung, Deputy Secretary Lok Sabha Secretariat,

Dr. Suman Datta, Chief Curator, Parliament Museum & Archives, Lok Sabha Secretariat

Briefing & Tour of the National Parliament of India

The largest global democracy, the Republic of India recently undertook a large-scale redevelopment of its Parliament in 2020.

We were provided a tour by the Lok Sabha Secretariat and Chief Curator of the new building including galleries that depicted the cultures, heritages and religious backgrounds of the people of India. It also depicts key moments in the evolution of their democratic institutions and practices.

We had an opportunity to understand their electronic voting in the respective chambers of the Parliament and how that has led to more efficient voting practices given the large number of elected representatives that serve both houses.

The respective Secretariat of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were very generous with their time and knowledge as we compared our parliamentary processes and historical and contemporary practices under our two systems operating under Westminster principles.

Travel Itinerary

Day 1: Friday 30 May 2025

Flight: Melbourne – Singapore - Delhi

Stayed at Lemnos Tree Premier, Delhi Airport. Aerocity Hospitality District, New Delhi, 110037, India
(1 Night) = AUD \$149.25

Day 2: Saturday 31 May 2025

Flight: Delhi – Varanasi

- Visited Swarved Mahamandir Dham, Varanasi
- Visted Educational Facility, Varanasi
- Visited Gaushalas
- Visited Mulagandhakuti Vihara - Sarnath Buddhist Temple, Sarnath
- Visited Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi

Stayed at Ramada Plaza by Wyndham, The Mall, Cantonment, Varanasi, 221002, India
IND \$7,138.88 (1 Night) = AUD \$106.00

Day 3: Sunday 1 June 2025

Flight: Varanasi - Delhi

- Tour of BAPS Akshardham, New Delhi
- Meeting with Gnanmunidas Swami (GM Swami)

Flight: Delhi - Amritsar

Stayed at Le Meridian Amritsar, Ajnala Road Rajansansi, Amritsar. Punjab, 143101, India
(1 Night) = AUD \$134.02

Day 4: Monday 2 June 2025

Meeting with Jatinder Pal Singh, Information Officer, Golden Temple, Amritsar

- Tour of Golden Temple, Amritsar

Flight: Amritsar – Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum)

Stayed at Mascot Hotel, Mascot Square, Thiruvananthapuram, 695033, Kerala, India
IND \$23,864.00 (4 Nights) = AUD \$444.00

Day 5: Tuesday 3 June 2025

- Meeting with The Honourable Mohammad Riyas, Minister for Tourism and Public Work

Stayed at Mascot Hotel, Mascot Square, Thiruvananthapuram, 695033, Kerala, India

Day 6: Wednesday 4 June 2025

- Meeting with Dr N. Khrishna Kumar, Hon. Secretary of Kerala Legislative Assembly, Shri Muhamaddi P, Additional Private Secretary to the Speaker and T. Manoharan Nair, Private Secretary to the Speaker
- Tour of Kerala Legislative Assembly
- Meeting with The Honourable Smt. Veena George, Minister for Health, Women and Child Welfare & Dr Rajan Khobragade, Chief Secretary Health and Family Welfare, Government of Kerala

Stayed at Mascot Hotel, Mascot Square, Thiruvananthapuram, 695033, Kerala, India

Day 7: Thursday 5 June 2025

- Visit Sree Narayana Dharma Sanghom, meeting with Swami Satchidananda, President and Swami Shubhangananda, General Secretary and Swami Sookshmananda
- Tour of Sivagiri Mutt, Sree Narayana Guru's residence (Sree Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi meeting took place at Sivagiri Mutt on 12 March 1925 during Mahatma Gandhi's visit)
- Tree Planting on International Environment Day
- Meeting with His Holiness, H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Head of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church)
- Tour of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam

Stayed at Mascot Hotel, Mascot Square, Thiruvananthapuram, 695033, Kerala, India

Day 8: Friday 6 June 2025

Flight: Thiruvananthapuram – Kannur

- Meeting with The Honourable A N Shamseer, Speaker of Kerala Legislative Assembly

Cultural Programs:

- Visit Overbury's Folly Seaside Park & Watch Tower
- Visit Dr Hermann Gundert Museum
- Experienced Traditional Kerala Lunch
- Visit to Odathil Juma Mosque
- Attended Traditional Martial Arts (Kalaripayattu) Performance
- Meeting with Karthik Panigrahi, IAS Officer, Judiciary and District Collector
- Visited Malabar Cancer Centre

Stayed at Government of Kerala Guest House, Kannur Main Road, Payyambalam, 670001, Kannur, India

IND \$3,098.00 (1 Night) = AUD \$55.00

Day 9: Saturday 7 June 2025

Flight: Kannur to Hyderabad

- Meeting with Dr. B. Chennakesava Rao, Director of Advancement and Dean Administration, Vignana Jyothi, Manager and Dr Kiran Chakravarthula from VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology
- Attended Dinner & Cultural Program

Stayed at Mahishmati Farm Stays, Nehru Outer Ring Road, Godumakunta, Secunderabad, Telangana, 501301, Hyderabad

(No Receipt – Not Claiming)

Day 10: Sunday 8 June 2025

- Official Welcome Event in Town Square hosted by Malla Reddy MP
- Visited Keesaragutta Sri Rama Lingeswara Swamy Temple, Telangana
- Meeting with Prof. V.S.K. Reddy (Vice Chancellor) & other faculty Members - Malla Reddy University
- Tour of Malla Reddy University Campus
- Traditional Hyderabad Lunch

Drive: Hyderabad to Vijayawada

- Meeting with Praveen Kumar Perecharla, AP Drone Corporation

Stayed at Novotel Vijayawada Varun, Bharathi Nagar, Main Road, Gunadala, Vijayawada, 520008, Andhra Pradesh, India

IND \$10,699.24 (2 Night) = AUD \$191.00

Day 11: Monday 9 June 2025

- Meeting with Planet Sigma, Designers and Developers of Electronic Products, Hyderabad

Stayed at Novotel Vijayawada Varun, Bharathi Nagar, Main Road, Gunadala, Vijayawada, 520008, Andhra Pradesh, India

Day 12: Tuesday 10 June 2025

- Meeting with Manda Krishna Madiga – Indian Politician, Activist and recipient of the Padma Shri 'Lotus Honour'
- Meeting with UV Power – Solar Systems and Products for Construction and Industrial Sectors
- Visit to Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam Hindu Temple, Vijayawada

Flight: Vijayawada to Bengaluru

Stayed at Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru, Palace Road, Bengaluru, 560001, Karnataka, India
IND \$22,366.90 (2 Nights) = AUD \$400.00

Day 13: Wednesday 11 June 2025

- Meeting with Rajeev Annaluru, Trustee & Chief Operating Officer, Dr. D. R. Prasanna Kumar, Government Relations & Partnerships Lead and Saeed Mansoori, Partnerships & Strategic Alliances – Caring with Colour
- Visit to Social Enterprise (Calvery Karnataka State Arts & Crafts Emporium)

Stayed at Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru, Palace Road, Bengaluru, 560001, Karnataka, India

Day 14: Thursday 12 June 2025

Flight: Bengaluru - Delhi

- Meeting with Kh. Ginlal Chung, Deputy Secretary Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India and Dr. Suman Datta, Chief Curator, Parliament Museum & Archives, Lok Sabha Secretariat
- Tour of National Parliament of India

Stayed at Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, Hospitality District, New Delhi, 110037, India
IND \$9,027.00 (1 Night) = AUD \$162.00

Day 15: Friday 13 June 2025

Flight: Delhi – Singapore – Melbourne

International Travel Claims Summary:

Description	Amount
Domestic Airfares	\$285.00
Accommodation	\$1,656.00
Meals	\$352.00
Transport	\$191.00
Laundry	\$36.00
Taxi	\$366.68
TOTAL	\$2,866.68