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Angkor and Bagan under discussion



As reported in the [Nikkei Asian Review](#), Cambodia and Myanmar are looking for ways to promote jointly the ancient cities of Angkor and Bagan, two of the most important historical, religious, and archeological sites in Southeast Asia.

Tourism authorities and industry players from both countries have formed a working group that held its first meeting in Bagan in June to discuss joint promotion of the destinations, and airline and visa arrangements. A second meeting is planned for later in the year in Cambodia, and a bilateral agreement should be signed in 2018.

The collaboration is being formulated for the convenience of tourists with strong cultural interests. Both cities have their origins in the 9th century and prospered for more than 400 years. In their heydays, the pair were among the largest and most culturally significant cities on earth.

Angkor in northwestern Cambodia near the Tonle Sap lake has thousands of Buddhist temples and historical sites of Indian-influenced design in stone. Bagan lies some 600km north of Yangon, Myanmar's former capital, and has the remains of well over 3,500 temples, monasteries, and stupas built in brick and stucco.

Government agencies will help promote private sector tours by streamlining visa procedures. Consideration is also being given to establishing direct flights between Siem Reap near Angkor and Nyaung Oo near Bagan.

"There will be so many things to clear for the direct flight to materialize," Hla Myint, Myanmar's head of tourism promotion, told the Nikkei Asian Review. As an interim option, the working group has been in talks with Emirates which launched daily flights in July originating in Dubai that connect Yangon and Phnom Penh.


Currently Angkor attracts around 3 million tourists per year, while Bagan gets only 300,000. "If they are sold as a package, Bagan will get more tourists," said Hla Myint. Foreign tourist arrivals were up 6% in the first half of the year compared to 2016, according to the Myanmar Tourism Federation.

Tourism is a vital source of income for emerging economies like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, which compete increasingly with more established destinations like Thailand. In Cambodia, tourism already generates 20% of national income.

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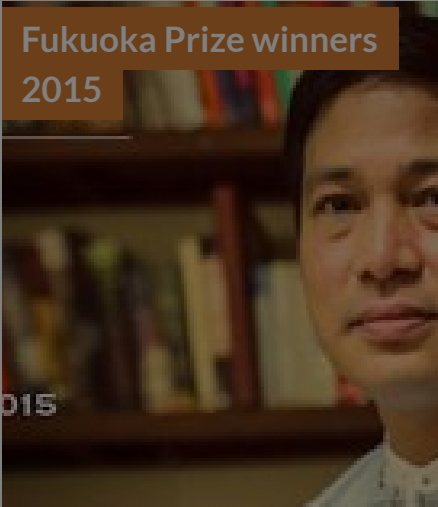
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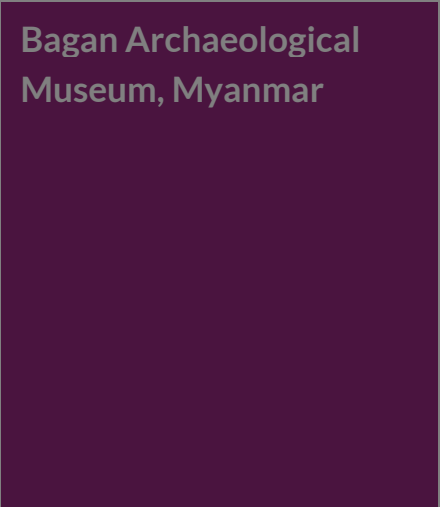
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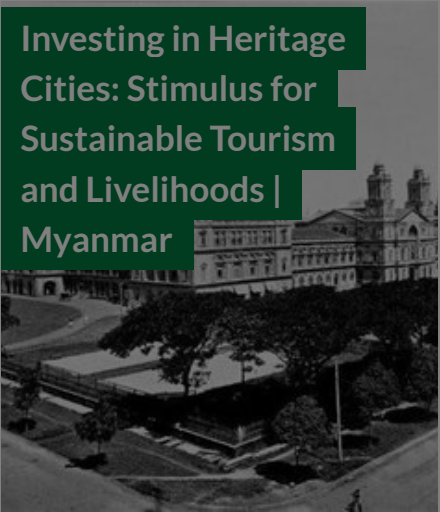
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