

India, US sign first-ever cultural property agreement for retrieval of antique objects

NEW DELHI: India and the United States on Friday their first agreement to prevent illegal trafficking of cultural property and return of antiquarian objects to their place of origin, the Ministry of Culture said.

The US-India Cultural Property Agreement was signed by Union Culture Secretary Govind Mohan and US envoy Eric Garcetti in the presence of Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on the sidelines of the ongoing 46th session of the World Heritage Committee at Bharat Mandapam here.

Interacting with the press later, Shekhawat said it is a general agreement that will allow "smooth repatriation" of historic artefact from the US to India.

He added that there are "297 items" that are "lying in the US, ready to be repatriated."

India has repatriated 358 antiquities since 1976, out of these 345 have been retrieved since 2014, the minister said.

"The agreement aims to prevent illegal trafficking of cultural property and retrieval of antiquarian objects to their place of origin," the Culture Ministry said in a statement.

The US Embassy in a statement said that with this agreement, India joins the ranks of 29 existing US bilateral cultural property agreement partners.

"This cultural property agreement is about two things. First and foremost, it's about justice - return-



ing to India and to Indians, what is rightfully theirs. Secondly, it's about connecting India with the world.

"Every American and every global citizen deserves to know, see, and experience the culture that we celebrate here today. To know Indian culture is to know human culture," the envoy said.

The US-India Cultural Property Agreement was negotiated by the State Department under the US law implementing the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Il-

licit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the statement said.

Garcetti also congratulated the government of India for hosting UNESCO's 46th session of the World Heritage Committee, saying it demonstrates the country's commitment to not only protecting its own cultural property, but also help others doing it.

"This event marks the culmination of nearly two years of diligent work by experts from both countries and fulfills President Biden's and Prime Minister Modi's com-

mitment to enhance cooperation to protect cultural heritage highlighted in the joint statement issued after their meeting in June 2023," the embassy said in the statement.

"Cultural property agreements prevent the illegal trade of cultural property and simplify the process by which looted and stolen antiquities may be returned to their country of origin.

"The United States has been unwavering in its commitment to protect and preserve cultural heritage worldwide and to restrict trafficking in cultural property," it said.

NSA Doval stresses on need for strengthening counter-terror cooperation at BIMSTEC meet

NAYPYITAW/NEW DELHI: National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, who is leading the Indian delegation at the 4th Annual Meeting of the BIMSTEC Security Chiefs in Naypyitaw, spoke on the need for strengthening cooperation in counter-terrorism, combating drug trafficking, arms smuggling and organized crime.

Delivering India's national statement at the BIMSTEC meet, the NSA also spoke on building BIMSTEC connectivity, holding the second Ports Conclave and on water security of Himalayan river systems.

The Indian Embassy in Myanmar in a post on X said: "NSA delivered India's national statement at #BIMSTEC meet. He spoke on strengthening cooperation in counter-terrorism; combating drug trafficking, arms smuggling and organized crime; BIMSTEC connectivity; holding 2nd Ports Conclave; and water security of Himalayan river systems."

Earlier on Thursday, NSA Doval met with the Myanmar NSA Admiral Moe Aung.

The BIMSTEC Security Chiefs also called on Prime



Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday.

The Indian Embassy in Myanmar in a post on X said: "NSA Shri Ajit Doval is leading the Indian delegation at the 4th Annual Meeting of #BIMSTEC Security Chiefs being held in Naypyitaw today.

He met with the Myanmar NSA Admiral Moe Aung yesterday, and BIMSTEC Security Chiefs called on Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing."

The Fourth BIMSTEC Security Chiefs' meeting is focused on the fight against regional terrorism and trans-

national crime and drug trafficking.

Besides NSA Doval, the secretary-General of BIMSTEC Indra Mani Pandey also called on Admiral Moe Aung.

During the meeting between NSA Doval and the Myanmar NSA, the two sides cordially exchanged views on the challenges facing countries and on the cooperation among BIMSTEC member states on the security of the regional economy.

They also discussed Myanmar's political developments and preparations for a free and fair multiparty democratic general election.

Punjab Governor Purohit says will visit border districts even if CM 'feels bad'

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit responded on Friday to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's dig at him for visiting the state's border districts, and said he will not refrain from doing so even if the AAP leader "feels bad".

Mann had on Thursday hit out at Purohit, saying he should refrain from creating an "atmosphere of conflict" and instead inaugurate a seminar at a university.

The governor, who earlier had been at loggerheads with the chief minister over various issues, also asked Mann "not to be afraid of him" and stressed that there was no reason for him to be "upset". Addressing the media here on Friday evening, Purohit spoke at length about his tours to the six border districts of Pathankot, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Gurdaspur and Tarn Taran.

He stressed that because of his visit, coordination between the police force and central agencies has improved which will help in their efforts to check smuggling of drugs and weapons from Pakistan. Purohit



also said village-level defence committees have been formed in border villages at his instance and that he has also declared cash prizes for villages helping in the recovery of drones and drugs.

Speaking to reporters in Jalandhar on Thursday, Mann said the governor holds a constitutional post and should fulfil his responsibility "and we will fulfil ours".

He was reacting to Purohit's visits to border districts and meetings with villagers and officials of the police and central agencies.

Replying to a question

about it, Purohit said, "Even if he feels bad about my visit, I will still go."

Referring to his current role, the governor said, "I meet all. I meet representatives of every party. I listen to them. There is no politics in me."

On the issue being made out of his visits, Purohit said, "Why the CM saab needs to be afraid of me? Why should the governor be a problem for anybody?"

Referring to his first visit to border districts several months back, Purohit told media persons that he came to know about a lack of coordination between central agencies and the state police force. "How to rectify it, was a challenge for me. People were afraid and they could not muster the courage. In villages, there is a culture that people know each other closely, they live like a family and know who is doing what," he said.

He said he involved all central agencies, including the Army, BSF, NIA, Narcotic Control Bureau and the Intelligence Bureau, and officials of the state police force for coordination in checking smuggling of drugs.

Budget ignored Haryana, state will ignore BJP during polls: Deepender

NEW DELHI: Several Congress MPs from Haryana on Friday protested in Parliament complex for the government's alleged neglect of the state in the Union Budget and said people will similarly ignore the BJP in the upcoming assembly elections there.

Rohtak MP Deepender Hooda claimed that the Budget has made no provision for Haryana and party colleagues from the state were targeted by Union minister Lalan Singh for raising the issue in the House.

Singh asked them to focus on what the Budget has for the country and not Haryana, he said.

"Is Haryana not part of



the country? The government has objection even at us making demand for the state. Let me tell them that people will ignore the BJP in the polls in the same manner the Budget has ignored the state," Hooda said.

The assembly polls in the BJP-ruled state are expected to be held in October.

Agniveers to get reservation in recruitments for police constables, forest guards in Chhattisgarh



RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Friday said the state would provide reservations for Agniveers from the state in recruitments for police constables and forest guards, among other posts.

Talking to reporters on the state assembly premises, Sai said Agniveers would be given priority while recruiting police constables and forest and jail guards once they complete their service in the Indian Army. The state government will soon issue necessary guidelines

to provide a fixed reservation to Agniveers, he said.

The Centre introduced the Agnipath scheme in 2022 for short-term induction of personnel in the Army, Navy and Air Force, with an aim to bring down the age profile of the three services.

The scheme provides for recruiting Agniveers youngsters between the age group of 17-and-a-half and 21 for a block period of four years with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for another 15 years.

Demand made in Lok Sabha to stop arbitrariness in fare collection by airlines

NEW DELHI: The issue of excessive fares being charged by airlines from Indians staying abroad was raised by members in the Lok Sabha on Friday and called it a 'loot' and demanded the intervention of the government to ban it.

Meanwhile, Speaker Om Birla also termed this as serious issue and said that the Civil Aviation Minister should call all the air service providing companies and stop their arbitrariness.

He said that the Minister should call the companies and ask them the reason about the hike in charges and come out with a solution to this problem and help the people.

Raising the issue during a Private Members' Resolution related to the arbitrariness of air services, Congress member Shafi Parambil, termed it as an irresponsible behaviour on the part of the air service companies and said that this arbitrary recovery is being made from the passengers.

He cited an example from Thiruvananthapuram to Dubai and said that on the first day, the air fare was charged more than Rs 90,000 and on the next day Rs 77,000 was charged for the same destination and the same time by the same flight.

The Congress MP said that the country's airlines are looting the people and doing injustice to the citizens of the country living abroad.

Parambil alleged that all the companies were looting the passengers. He called it an injustice to the people and said that the government should stop it. Air companies were torturing people and the government should take steps to save people from this atrocities.

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu was also present in the House when the Congress MP made these allegations.

Taking the issue of Shafi seriously, the Speaker intervened and asked Naidu to call all the air service companies and direct them to do justice to the people and look into the issue of what the members were saying.



SC terms verdict of Delhi HC single judge in arbitral award row between SpiceJet & Maran "atrocious"

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday got irked over a lengthy judgement penned by a single judge bench of the Delhi High Court in a case related to an arbitral award involving media baron Kalanithi Maran and SpiceJet, saying there was no "application of mind".

Suggesting that the case be now transferred to another judge by the Delhi High Court, the top court said the judgement "has to be carefully articulated" and "the judge must apply mind to grounds of challenge and then deduce if interference is warranted".

The strong observations against the single judge bench came from a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud during the hearing of an appeal by Kalanithi Maran and Kal Airways against a Delhi High Court order setting aside an arbitral



award asking the SpiceJet to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to the media baron and his firm.

The bench, also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, did not allow the submission of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Maran and his firm, that the legal aspects of

the dispute be considered.

"Come to the single judge order first...all that we can say about the single judge is filling up 250 pages is not writing a judgment under section 34 (of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act)

"This is atrocious. Just a number of the Supreme Court judge-

ments (is cited) saying (scope of) interference is limited. Let us not make any observations about this single judge. Where has he even applied his mind?" the CJ observed.

Section 34 of the Act deals with applications for setting aside arbitral awards.

"(By) Reading the single judge (bench) order, it does not seem there is any application of mind. The Delhi High Court should now assign the case to a judge other than the single judge who was assigned the case," the CJ said.

The bench refused to entertain a plea of Maran, who also owns the Sun Group that runs television channels and several publications, and Kal Airways against the Delhi HC order that had set aside an arbitral award asking the low-cost carrier to refund monies plus interest to the media baron and his firm. A

single judge bench of the Delhi High Court had on July 31, 2023 upheld the arbitral award asking SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran and his company Kal Airways.

The award was passed by the arbitration tribunal on July 20, 2018 in favour of Maran and the Kal Airways. On May 17 this year, a division bench of the Delhi High Court, while dealing with an intra-court appeal against the order, set aside the single judge bench order that had upheld the arbitral award.

It had allowed the appeals of Singh and SpiceJet against the single judge bench order and remanded the matter back to the court concerned to consider the petitions challenging the arbitral award afresh. Maran and Kal Airways moved the top court against the decision.

Speaker Birla reprimands minister for keeping hand in pocket while speaking



NEW DELHI: A Union minister drew the ire of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday after he was found chatting while putting his hand in the pocket.

"Mr Minister, please remove your hand from the pocket," the speaker remarked during the Question Hour.

Birla then appealed to the members not to walk into the House with hands in pockets. He also urged MPs not

to cross in front of a member who was raising some issue in the House.

"Whenever an honourable member is speaking, no one should cross him and sit in the seat in front of the member. You can take a seat behind," the speaker said.

According to parliamentary rules, passing between the member addressing the House and the Chair is considered a breach of parliamentary etiquette.

Artisans from different states set up stalls at Delhi Haat in Minority Affairs Ministry's event

NEW DELHI: Artisans from different states have set up stalls to showcase their handicrafts at Lok Samvardhan Parv, an exhibition being hosted by the Ministry of Minority Affairs at Delhi Haat.

As part of its 100 days' programme, the ministry has organised the event to showcase the schemes and programmes and also highlight the activities undertaken in convergence with partner organisations and success stories under its various schemes.

Tadiyomso, who is in his 50s, is one of the many participants in the event. He is from Arunachal Pradesh and makes cutlery using bamboo.

"I am in this profession for the last 28 years and this is the first time that I have got the chance to present my crafts here

which is overwhelming and a new experience for me," he said.

Rajdeep Khanuj, assistant professor in the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), one of the other participants, said he has been working with local Bhopali artisans since 2021 for reviving 'Bhopali batua' which was used by Bhopali nawabs and was on the verge of disappearing from market.

"The Bhopali batua is adorned with zardozi and bead work which makes it very ethnic. The participants are currently making 'potlis' and handbags using the same style," he added.

Another artisan Sankharama, who is from Andhra Pradesh, makes leather puppetry. "There are 200 families who are involved in leather puppetry and they sell their items in the

local market as well as online too," she said.

She has been crafting puppetry from her childhood and also gives training to many local people who sustain their life by selling the craft pieces, she added.

Lok Samvardhan Parv is celebrating and showcasing over 70 exquisite handicraft and handloom products from various states made by 162 artisans belonging to various minority communities.

These participants include artisans promoted under various schemes of Ministry through National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), National Institute of Design (NID) and other Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs). The event was inaugurated on July 18 and will conclude on July 31.