

## **Air India to transfer its strong 4k ‘Maharaja Collection’ of artworks to NGMA**

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Air India will hand over its priceless collections of around 4,000 paintings and sculptures of famous artists to the National Gallery of Modern Arts (NGMA) for their preservation and public display.

The airline signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the NGMA on Wednesday in this regard in the presence of Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy.

The prized collections of the airline include works of legendary artists such as M F Hussain, Laxman Pai, V S Gaitonde, Sayed Haider Raza, Jatin Das, V Prabha, Shankar Palsikar, and Anjolie Ela Menon, among others.

With this MoU signed at an event here, the NGMA, which is a prestigious institution for modern and contemporary arts, will now be a repository of the entire collection of Air India.

In eight decades of its commercial operations, starting from 1932, Air India offered free tickets to budding artists who went on to become iconic names in the world of art.

These artists reciprocated this gesture of goodwill by offering their works - paintings, statues and wooden sculptures, among others - to the airline at different points of time which, over a period of time, became a priceless collection.

The MoU was signed by Air India company secretary Kalpana Rao and NGMA director Temsunaro Jamir.

Calling it a historic moment, Aviation Minister Scindia said that Air India has many first to its name such as first mail courier aircraft which J R D Tata himself piloted from Karachi to Mumbai, the first international flight between Mumbai and London and the first longest non-stop flight between New Delhi and New York.

"Air India also transported our culture. Many of the paintings that you will see in this collection are all a contribution in kind for the fare that was to be paid while flying by Air India. So, many of the artists contributed their art and passion which has now become a part of a wonderful historical collection," Scindia said.

Talking about the range of collections, he said that besides paintings and sculptures, even the menu cards of Air India during that period is a piece of art.

"It is not the contemporary menu card that we receive when we board the aircraft today. They were large menu cards with an art work on its cover, beautifully engraved in the interiors," he said.

Extending his gratitude to both the civil aviation minister and Air India for handing over the collection, Culture Minister Reddy said that since its inception in 1953, NGMA has been working to protect and preserve the art works.

"Whatever transfer is happening today, we will preserve them for our future generations. We will also display these artefacts," Reddy said.

He added that besides preserving these priceless artworks, the ministry will continue to work with Air India to take them to different parts of the world.

Air India chief executive officer Campbell Wilson and senior officials of culture and aviation ministries were present at the event.

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