

Chennai, Busan bond over culture

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: For a 25-member team of industrialists and entrepreneurs from the South Korean city of Busan, business was relegated to the sidelines and focus was on culture during a visit to the city on Thursday.

To build diplomatic ties between Chennai and the South Korean city, the Metropolitan Government of Busan has donated four artworks to the Indo-Korean Cultural Centre.

On behalf of the mayor of Busan, who was here in March, Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Cho Sung Je presented the pieces to InKo Centre chairman Venu Srinivasan. Stressing the need to understand each other's culture, Cho said "The gift of paint-



'First Snow at Naksana Temple' by Park Ki-ok is one of the artworks gifted by Busan to Inko Centre on Thursday

ings and sculpture will foster people-to-people relations."

While the paintings gives a glimpse into the traditional and urban side of the second largest city in South Korea, a porcelain sculpture of intricate knots was a metaphor for the growing

bond between the two cities. However, it was a pair of traditional Korean flower shoes referred to as "an intangible cultural property of Busan" that stood out.

With no direct commercial intent, the gesture from Busan

initiates an inter-cultural dialogue. "There have been various trade missions, sister-city agreements, but this is probably a first where there has been a strong push for culture, a soft diplomatic tool," said Inko Centre director Rathi Jafer.

The arts and culture department of Busan has extended an invitation to Inko Centre to work together on projects.

While business has brought the two countries closer, the consul general of Korea Kyung-soo Kim said it was imperative to build a socio-cultural link for collaboration to grow. "I think advertising one's product in a foreign country is secondary, Their needs to be good faith for businesses to thrive. It is not policies that interest people, but art, culture and films that bring them together," he said.

ART ROUTE TO ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

TUBA RAQSHAN | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 25

A visiting delegation of the Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry made a donation of artworks, by leading Korean artists, to the InKo Centre, in a bid to strengthen cultural and economic ties between India and South Korea.

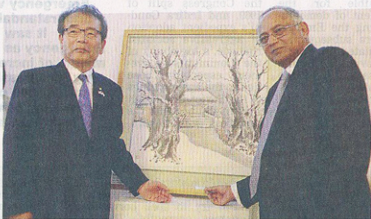
Mr Cho Sung Je, president of Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, donated four artworks to the centre, which was received by industrialist Venu Srinivasan, also the centre's chairman.

Mr Srinivasan, who was recently feted as 'The Honorary Citizen of Busan', said, "Culture is very important because people identify themselves in a country by its culture. If you do not have any understanding of the culture of a country, you cannot just have economic relationship. Korea was not as well known in India 20 years ago.

But now, Indians are aware of how old and rich Korean culture is. Equally, we have made Korean visitors aware of our rich and ancient Indian culture. It has been a great cultural collaboration.

This visit by the Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry will strengthen this relationship further," he said.

Mr Cho Sung Je, president of the Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, traced the close history shared by India and



(Above) Cho Sung Je, president of Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry with industrialist Venu Srinivasan. And some of the artworks donated by Korean artists. —DC

South Korea. "South Korea and India have had a very special relationship over a long period.

Cultural exchange plays an important role. I also believe that for the economic development of both the countries, we need to have culture exchanges as a foundation," he said.

Drawing a parallel between the Korean city of Busan and Chennai, Mr Sung Je added, "Busan and Chennai share many things in common. On the culture front, we regard people from Chennai as our dear friends.

We have many Korean companies based in Chennai. The Mayor of Busan,



● **Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry donated artworks to the InKo Centre, in an effort towards strengthening the cultural and economic ties between India and South Korea**

closer ties not only between the artistic community but also the people of both countries. Artworks have longevity. For example, the French gifted the Statue of Liberty to the United States of America, which is a landmark now. It is also a mark of cultural ties between the two countries," noted this artist.

Also present at this occasion was Mr Kyungsoo Kim, Consul General of South Korea.

'Port' by Choi Bong-Jun, 'Sculpture of Knots' by Kwak Sun-Gon, 'First Snow at Naksana Temple' by Park Ki-Ok and An Hae-Pyo, an intangible cultural asset from Korea were donated. Artist Jacob Jebaraj from Cholamandal Artists' Village, said he was excited to view original artwork.

"Viewing an original artwork is very different from seeing it online. It is prestigious that we can see these original Korean artworks on display. This is truly a treasure. The best way to relate to a nation is to understand its art and culture. This cultural dialogue is important," he said.

Suh Byung-Soo, visited Chennai in March this year.

Dr Rathi Jafer, director of InKo Centre, said this donation was a very important gesture of friendship.

"Art and culture, I think, is a soft diplomatic tool – it works on the hearts and minds of people, changing perceptions and bringing people together in a meaningful way. That is why we look upon this as an important, symbolic gesture of friendship," she said. Rm. Palaniappan, regional secretary of Lalit Kala Akademi, pointed out that art and culture had the power to bring countries closer.

"Cultural exchanges like this help develop

