

## Welfare fund for ageing artistes mooted

The central government is exploring the possibility of setting up a fund for the welfare of ageing folk and performing artistes in the country.

Discussing the issue at the Parliamentary Consultative Committee Friday, Tourism and Culture Minister Ambika Soni said her ministry is exploring if "a corpus fund" could be established for the welfare of ageing folk and performing artistes, who are associated with the seven zonal cultural centres in the country.

Addressing a meeting of the committee, she said efforts are on to streamline the procedure of granting pensions to the eligible artistes so that there should be no delay in receiving such payments.

Lauding the role of the zonal cultural centres, Soni said these centres are not only reviving and strengthening the traditional performing art forms but are also showcasing India's rich, colourful and vibrant culture world over.

"Performing arts are an integral part of cultural tourism. They promote ethnic and cultural identity and foster a feeling of national pride in the host community. In turn, cultural tourism leads to rejuvenation of local arts and crafts, re-establishment of vanishing lifestyles, re-discovery of ethnic identity and greater involvement of communities," she said.

The minister said to sustain interest of the youth towards the traditional performing arts, efforts have to be made to make these arts forms economically sustainable.

The meeting was attended by several MPs, including Lok Sabha members Pratibha Singh and Chander Kumar and Rajya Sabha members Chandan Mitra and Barun Mukherjee.

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