

Prime minister releases stamp on Bismillah Khan

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Thursday released a commemorative postage stamp on shehnai legend Ustad Bismillah Khan here, terming it 'a token of our nation's and our government's respect for him'.

"The release of this commemorative postage stamp in memory of Khan saheb is a token of our nation's and our government's respect for him and the noble tradition he represented," Manmohan Singh said.

"His music lives and endures beyond the boundaries of religion, caste, language and nation. I respectfully pay homage to this great son of India," Singh added.

The prime minister said Bismillah Khan's life and work 'are an inspiration to us to realize how every serious pursuit of a chosen vocation can transform oneself into a deeply enriching and inspiring spiritual journey'.

"His legacy, which is an integral part of our composite culture, will continue to inspire many-many generations to come," he said.

'Bharat Ratna Khan Saheb became synonymous in the public imagination with the shehnai. He played so much that we remember him every time we hear the shehnai,' the prime minister added.

"It is no exaggeration to say that his music was divine, soothing the nerves and having a balming effect on people who listen to it. The transformation of the shehnai from a mere accompanying piece in concerts to a respected instrument owes a lot to the creative endeavours of Bismillah Khan," the prime minister maintained.

Seven decades of Bismillah Khan's eventful and artistic life were inseparably woven with the shehnai and the marvel of his music was deeply rooted in our composite heritage and culture, Singh said.

"A devout Muslim, he did not find any contradiction between his faith and music," the prime minister added.

Telecommunications and IT Minister A. Raja and his deputy Jyotiraditya Scindia were also present on the occasion.

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