Kabul hosts 'Jaisalmer Yellow'

e Afghans always have something to do. But today is something special. I am glad that it is happening now," says Fateh Adil, Director of National Gallery of Art.

The spirit is understandable as the National Art Gallery of Afghanistan concluded a first-of-its-kind exhibition 'Jaisalmer Yellow' — a collective product of leading painters from SAARC region.

Earlier, India hosted a SAARC artists' camp in the golden city of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. The artists' camp, held from January 14 to 23 this year, brought together 25 leading painters of SAARC countries, including two eminent painters from Afghanistan — Yousof Asefi and Abdul Shakoor Khasrawe. 'Jaisalmer Yellow' is the impressive outcome of this camp.

The exhibits in 'Jaisalmer Yellow' reflected the synthesis of artistic innovation with traditional scenes and culture.

Kabul was the first SAARC capital to receive 'Jaisalmer Yellow', which was on display for a fortnight from September 15. From Kabul, the exhibition travels to other capitals of SAARC member countries.

Inaugurating the exhibition, Afghan

Minister for Information and Culture Khurram spoke about the exhibition reflecting the spirit of SAARC.

Thanking the ICCR and the Government of India for bringing the exhibition to Kabul, Khurram said he was looking for more cultural interactions in future.

Ambassador Rakesh Sood highlighted the unique nature of the exhibition, with Afghanistan becoming the first SAARC country to host the exhibition.

Sood said Afghanistan was not only the land bridge, but could also become a "cultural bridge".

The Director General of ICCR, Pavan Varma, spoke about the diverse subjects the exhibition dwelt on, and which, were bound by the theme of the unifying power of art. Varma expressed the hope that the exhibition would lead to further cooperation in the field of culture and fine arts between the two countries.

Asefi, whose work was also on display at the exhibition, was happy that Afghanistan had hosted the exhibition. "It is not a routine event for us. Afghanis have a tradition of receiving different cultures and absorbing them over time. The show highlights both our work and gives an opportunity to the public, for the first time, to see the entire spectrum of the paintings from the region," he said.

Asefi was instrumental in protecting valuable paintings of Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. Overlaying the original oils with a thick layer of water colours, Asefi protected around 84 paintings by renowned 20th century Afghan painters like Abdul Kadir Breshna, Prof. Ghulam Mohammed Maimaneghi of the Fine Arts Faculty of Kabul University, and Master Abdul Aziz, an Indian who lived in Kabul for 80 years. When the Taliban came swooping down to inspect the "unislamic nature of art", they found nothing amiss with these paintings and left them untouched. After the overthrow of the Taliban regime, Asefi diligently restored all these paintings for posterity and art.

"It is pure pleasure to see the variety and vibrancy of these paintings. This is a boon and boost for local artists," summed up Taimor, an enthusiastic visitor and official of Foundation for Culture and Civil Society.

For a country ravaged by conflicts and violence for about three decades, it is true that art is a way of finding peace and harmony.



Afghan Minister for Information and Culture Abdul Karim Khurram and Vice-President of ICCR Dr Syed Shahid Mahdi inaugurating the painting exhibition 'Jaisalmer Yellow'.