

# Top musicians meet Manmohan

## Call for steps to promote classical arts

Gargi Parsai

**NEW DELHI:** Parliament on Wednesday saw the rare appearance of top classical musicians, who met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh about government attention and priority to the promotion of the classical arts through various measures, initiatives and funding.

Top musicians, including Hariprasad Churasia, Shivkumar Sharma, Birju Maharaj, Zakir Hussain, Sajan and Rajan Mishra, Arvind Parikh, Sudha Raghunathan, U. Srinivas, Ajoy Chakraborty, Ravikiran, T.N. Krishnan and Purvi Parikh, met the Prime Minister at his office in Parliament under the banner of the recently-formed All-India Musicians Group. Former Culture Secretary Ashok Vajpeyi was also present.

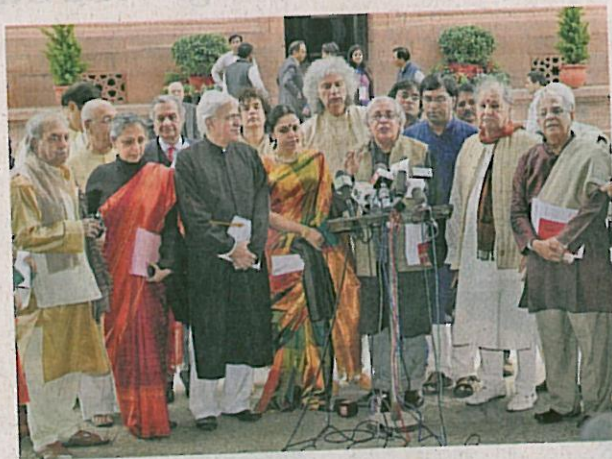
Emerging from their meeting with Dr. Singh, the artistes said that they drew his attention to the dwindling importance to the classical arts, and the great role played by the fine arts in unifying diffused values and identities in society.

"While giving attention to modern India, we must not lose touch with our traditional, classical and folk arts," they underscored.

The performers urged Dr. Singh to appoint a committee of experts to review the state of classical music education, suggest measures to promote the traditional guru-shishya parampara institutions in the country and to invite the corporate sector to promote the classical heritage of India.

### Help from corporate sector

In fact, they wanted one per cent of corporate turnover to be exempt from income tax and contributed



**ARTISTES' PLEA:** (From left) Birju Maharaj, Leela Samson, Rajan Mishra, Zakir Hussain (partly visible), Sudha Raghunathan, Shivkumar Sharma, Ashok Vajpeyi, N. Ravikiran, Hariprasad Chaurasia and T.N. Krishnan, among others, brief the media after their meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Parliament in New Delhi on Wednesday to put forth a proposal to promote and preserve Indian art and music. — PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

- National repository of Indian Classical Music, Museum of Indian Performing Arts sought
- Dr. Singh urged to invite corporate sector in promoting the nation's classical heritage

towards the support of cultural activities.

They also wanted the Ministry of Culture to create a national repository of Indian Classical Music and establish a National Museum of Indian Performing Arts. With the intention of familiarising young minds with the nation's cultural heritage, the artistes urged the government to strengthen education in music and fine arts in schools and higher educational institutions and include music in the school curriculum, build a cadre of music teachers and improve the lot of music teachers in the country.

Criticising the dominance of "absurd reality shows" on television, the performers urged the Prime Minister to support and fund an independent channel dedicated to culture and fine arts.

### Support for aged artistes

They wanted the Culture Ministry, held currently by the Prime Minister, to create a National Welfare Fund for senior, aged and impoverished artistes.

They said the Prime Minister was open to their suggestions and had conveyed that funds were no problem.