

# Yogi Adityanath to present UP's exquisite artwork as return gift to businessmen at investors' meet

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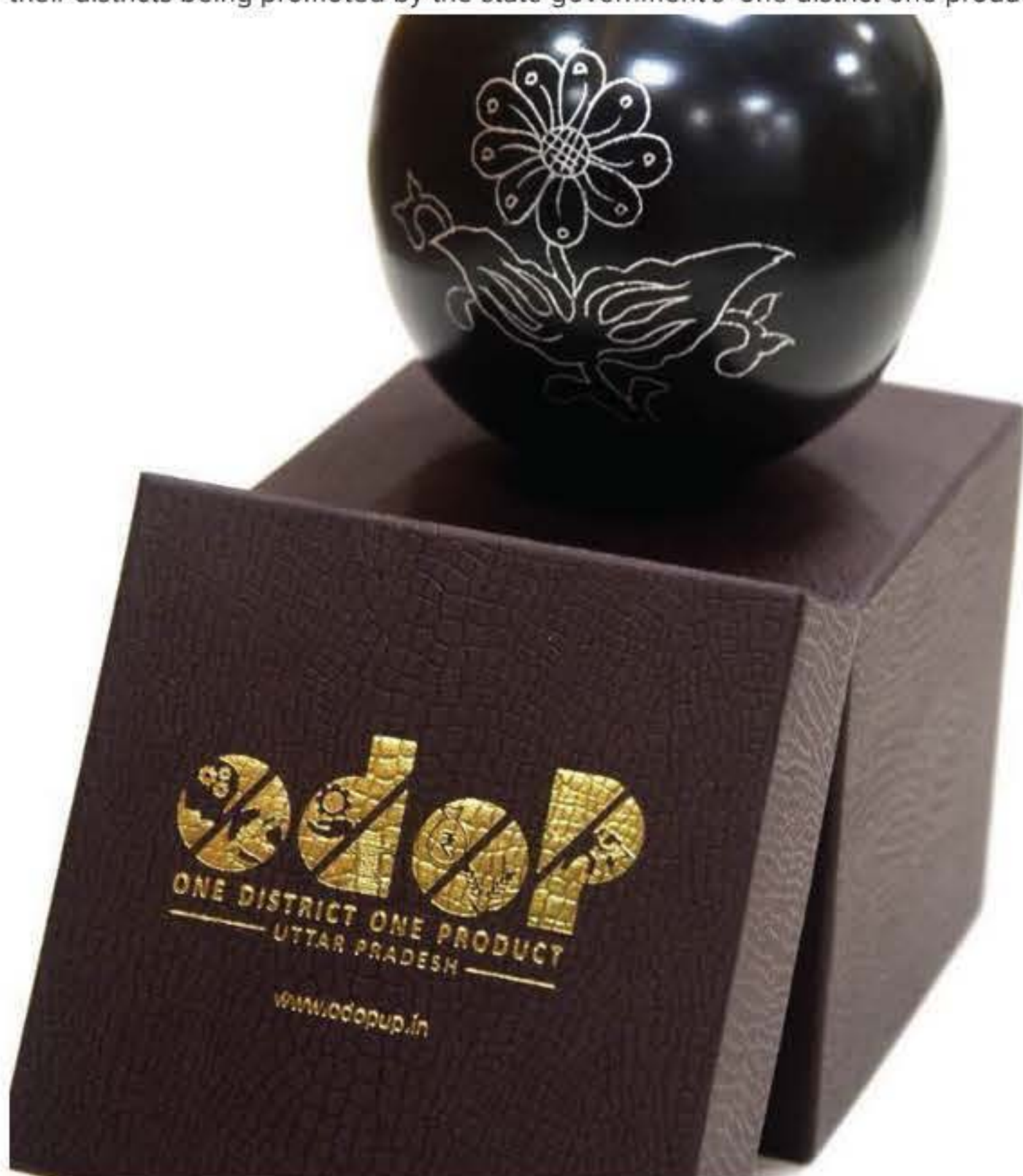


LUCKNOW: Exclusively made cufflinks from Banda's shajar stone and gulabi meenakari will be Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath's return gift to businessmen who attend the third groundbreaking ceremony on June 3.

At least 45 bigwigs from top business houses in the country have agreed to attend the groundbreaking ceremony in addition to more than 150 businessmen, start-up owners and policymakers.



Officials at the state industries department said the range of gifts also includes Aligarh's brass Lau diya set, ceramic mugs, Lakhnavi chikankari stoles, Firozabad's glass Ganesha and Azamgarh's black pottery. Many of these products are a signature of their districts being promoted by the state government's 'one district one product' scheme.



They said that some of the gifts are exquisite and truly unique. Citing the example of Shajar, which is a semi-precious stone belonging to the quartz family, officials said that the technical name of this stone is dendritic agate.

"It has been described as a geological wonder found under riverbeds. For centuries, it has been used to make memoirs and jewellery," believe artisans engaged in the trade, adding that Banda's association with the Shajar stone is a 400-years-old story.

According to the legend, Abdullah, an Arab stone carver patronised by the Nawab of Banda, was on a trail. Abdullah felt a desire for smoke but couldn't find any source of fire around to light up. A villager gave him a stone chip and iron strip to light fire. Abdullah noted an artistic pattern on the stone and carried it back to the city and polished it to make jewellery.

Shajar is a corrupt form of Shazar, Arabic for a tree or plant.

"He presented the first piece to the Nawab who was impressed and soon the art became a fashion statement," said the artisans, adding that barely a dozen families in Banda were associated with it.

Likewise, the Gulabi Meenakari is one of the age-old artwork traditions being nurtured in the bylanes of Varanasi. The dominance of pink colour in the work is what gives the work its name and uniqueness.

The black pottery items being handed over as memoirs on the occasion belong to Azamgarh. It bears semblance with the Northern Black Polished Ware pottery of urban Iron Age culture of the Indian Subcontinent.