

# Returned by British, Piprahwa relics to be exhibited in Russia

Dy CM Maurya to lead 35-member delegation to Kalmykia

**MAULSHREE SETH**

LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 21

UTTAR PRADESH Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya will be heading to Kalmykia in Russia this week to exhibit the Piprahwa relics of Lord Buddha that were recently returned to India by the British, officials said.

The Piprahwa relics were discovered in 1898 at the Piprahwa stupa in Siddharthnagar district of UP and are widely regarded as an important archaeological find linked to early Buddhist history. They were believed to have been taken abroad during British rule and were returned to India in July after 127 years.

Uttar Pradesh has been developing tourism infrastructure around the Piprahwa site to capitalise on the relics' cultural and religious significance.

Claiming that in a way he comes from the same lineage as that of Buddha, Maurya said that he would be leading a group of 35 individuals including officials from Union Ministry of Culture as well as a secretary rank officer from Uttar Pradesh.

The relics will be taken to Russia on an Indian Air Force aircraft. The delegation is scheduled to depart on September 23, sources said. The exhibition in Elista, the capital of the Republic of Kalmykia, Russia, will begin on September 24 and will continue till October 1.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Maurya said, "I have



The relics were returned to India by British this July. *Express*



**Growing depth of ties with Russia: Deputy CM Maurya**

been given this privilege by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it is a feeling of pride to lead the delegation carrying Buddha's relics, which also include his last remains to Russia."

"This visit assumes importance in the backdrop of what the PM has said that it is a matter of pride that India has given Buddha to the world; and also considering the growing depth of spiritual and cultural ties with Russia," he added.

The exhibition is expected to draw scholars, devotees and international audiences, officials added. The relics have previously been exhibited in Thailand and Vietnam, officials noted.

"The exhibition will further India's cultural outreach and

strengthen bilateral ties. The display of Buddhist relics will underscore India's role as the birthplace and custodian of Buddhist heritage. A short documentary on Piprahwa relics will also be screened at the National Museum in Elista," Maurya said.

The state government hopes the international shows will raise global awareness of the Piprahwa site and boost pilgrimage and tourism to the region. State authorities are coordinating logistics and security for the transport and display of the artefacts.

The move forms part of a broader effort by the state to promote heritage tourism and attract international visitors to sites associated with India's religious and archaeological history.

The administration is also working on ground-level improvements around the Piprahwa stupa, including better visitor amenities and signage, as part of its tourism development plan for Siddharthnagar district.

