



In this photograph Afghan photographer Haji Mirzaman (right) takes a portrait of a boy with his homemade wooden box camera known as "kamra-e-faoree" on a sidewalk in Kabul. — AFP photos



Afghan photographer Haji Mirzaman holds negative images after developing them inside a homemade wooden box camera.



Afghan photographer Haji Mirzaman shows a processed photograph taken with his homemade wooden box camera.



Afghan photographer Haji Mirzaman speaks during an interview with AFP at his home in Kabul.



Afghan photographer Haji Mirzaman develops a portrait picture of a man taken with his homemade wooden box camera.



Afghan photographer Haji Mirzaman (right) stands next to his homemade wooden box camera known as "kamra-e-faoree".

Historic development: Afghanistan's disappearing box cameras

Haji Mirzaman was just a teenager when he started taking photos using a homemade wooden box camera in his cousin's studio in downtown Kabul. He took black-and-white portraits of people for passports, identity cards and other documents using his "magic box" on a sidewalk, producing prints in a couple of minutes. Now in his 70s, he says the instant camera-or "kamra-e-faoree" as it is known in Dari has survived wars, invasions and a Taliban ban on photography, but is now

in danger of disappearing because of digital technology. "These cameras are retired now," he told AFP at his small house in Kabul as he set up the box on its wooden tripod. "I am just keeping this last remaining camera."

The box is both camera and dark-room, and to show how it works Mirzaman put photographic paper and developing liquid inside the device in preparation for a shot. He then briefly removed the lens cover and instantly created a negative. Reaching inside the

box through a light-proof funnel, he processed the negative and then developed a print. In a few minutes, the photo was ready. "Nowadays, photographers all use digital cameras... fewer and fewer people know how this camera works," he said.

Golden age

The boxes were made by local carpenters, he said, but the lenses were imported. The golden age of box cameras in Afghanistan came when compul-

sory national service was introduced in the 1950s, meaning thousands of recruits needed photos for military identity cards. The Taleban, who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and forbade images of people, allowed Mirzaman to take official photos with his box camera. After the group's ouster, the machines thrived again when millions of students returned to schools and ID cards were made compulsory.

Since their return to power in August, the hardline Islamists have made no

public declaration on taking pictures-and young fighters are frequently seen snapping photos of each other, or selfies, with their mobile phones. Mirzaman has taught all four of his sons photography, but none now uses box cameras. The family's last remaining kamra-e-faoree is now on display outside their studio-a striking reminder of Afghanistan's photographic history. — AFP

Mexico fights 'plagiarism' with indigenous fashion fair

Mexico is fighting back against what it calls the plagiarism of indigenous textiles, bringing together traditional artisans and international designers for dialogue aimed at creating a more equitable fashion industry. Dozens of indigenous weavers and other artisans are gathering this weekend at the Los Pinos former presidential residence in Mexico City for the "Original" fair hosted by the culture ministry. Alongside an open-air market selling clothes and accessories such as the huipil, a traditional white cotton blouse with finely embroidered patterns, there are fashion parades resembling indigenous pride marches.

The goal is to end what Mexico's leftist government denounces as cultural appropriation of the motifs, embroidery and colors of indigenous communities by foreign fashion houses. "Plagiarism is not a tribute. Theft is not the fruit of inspiration," Culture Minister Alejandra Frausto said at the fair's inauguration. She denounced the "modern-day pirates" who "take what they like and label it as any kind of merchandise."

'Lack of communication'

Mexico won an apology a year ago from French designer Isabel Marant after Frausto demanded an explanation for Marant's use of the traditional patterns of the Purepecha community in her collection. Similar complaints have been lodged against major clothing brands, including Zara and Mango. Marant said future designs would properly "pay tribute to our sources of inspiration." A representative of her company was due to meet directly with indigenous artisans at the Mexico City fair, as was one for the Spanish designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada. On Friday, two young designers from Paris sat down with craftsman Ignacio Netzahualcoyotl and his partner Christian Janat at their workshop in the state of Tlaxcala east of Mexico City.

"Plagiarism is the result of a lack of communication," Netzahualcoyotl said afterward. "We ask that our work be paid for fairly," he added. "The price must take into account the design, the patterns, the number of hours worked," he said after presenting his fabric to the two Parisians. "We want to come to an agreement with



the artisans with whom we are going to work," said French designer Theophile Delaeter, co-creator of the Calher Delaeter brand with his Franco-Mexican co-creator Alonso Calderon Hernandez.

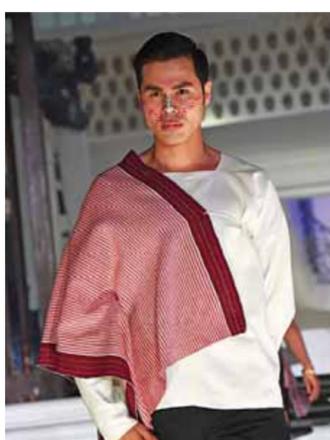
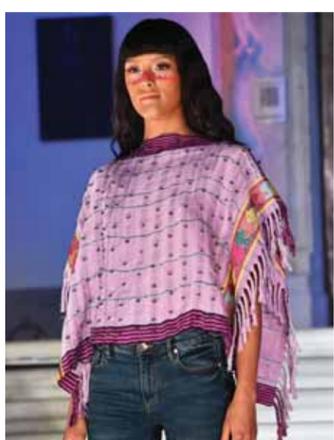
'It's theft'

Indigenous artisans at the fair complained of discovering copies of their fabric on the internet. "A few months ago, we fought because we found a comput-

er-reproduced huipil," said Candy Margarita de la Cruz Santiago, a young weaver from the southern state of Oaxaca. Legal measures are being put in place to tackle the problem.

"Under new provisions that we've had since last year, written consent of the communities is necessary when this kind of textile art is going to be used for profit," said a representative of the National Institute of Copyright, Marco Antonio

Morales Montes. Mexico is also asking for a discussion within the World Intellectual Property Organization about the issue, he added. Artisan weavers like Marta Serna Luis, 58, hope the steps will bring them the recognition they are seeking. "We must apply the law against the perpetrators of plagiarism. It's theft," she said. — AFP



Models present creations at the Centro Cultural Los Pinos, former Los Pinos presidential office, during the Original Fashion Week in Mexico City. — AFP photos