

**Consulate General of India
New York**

Minutes of Meeting held with GOPIO Members

February 29, 2018, 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Consulate Ballroom

Consul General Mr. Sandeep Chakravorty, Consul (CPV) Mr. L. Krishnamurthy, Consul (CA) Mr. K. Devadasan Nair, Consul (Pol/Press/Infm & Culture) Mr. Vipul Kumar Mesariya, Consul (Trade/Edu/Commerce) Mr. Devi Prasad Misra, Consul (HOC) Mr. Jaideep Vice Consul Mr. Sandeep Grover and Yoga & Teacher of Indian Culture Dr. Dayashankar Vidyalkar were present from the Consulate.

The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) team was represented and attended by the Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Vice President Mr. Ram Gadhavi, Secretary Dr. Rajeev Mehta, GICC & GOPIO Life Member Mr. Prakash Shah, Dr. Yusuf Syed along with Past Presidents and members of The Tri-State area chapters. (Comprising of the following(Mr. Lal Motwani, Intl. Coordinator-at-Large, Dr. Asha Samant, Intl. Coordinator-at-Large, Mr. Dinesh Mittal, Chair, Chapter Review Committee, Mr. Jaswant Modi, Associate Secretary, Ms. Nami Kaur, Chair, GOPIO Media Council, Ms. Sudha Acharya, Chair, GOPIO Council on Seniors, Dr. Parveen & Usha Chopra, GOPIO Life Member, Mr. Harbachan Singh, GOPIO Life Member, Mr. Viresh Sharma, GOPIO Life Member, Ms. Beena Kothari, President, GOPIO-New York, GOPIO-New York, Mr. John Paul, Treasurer, GOPIO-New York, Mr. Shelly Nichani, Imme. Past President, GOPIO-CT, Mr. Santosh Gannu, GOPIO-CT, Ms. Rajul Shah, President, GOPIO-North Jersey, Mr. Dhananjay Desai, Vice President, Mr. Nitin Shukla, Treasurer, Mr. Bharat Rana, Board Member, Mr. Suresh Reddy, President, GOPIO-Central Jersey, Ms. Hemal Dhavalikar, VP, GOPIO-Central Jersey, Mr. Vijay Garg, Secretary, GOPIO-Central Jersey, Mr. Kunal Gupta, Treasurer, GOPIO-Ctrl Jersey, Mr. Jairam Persuad, Pres., GOPIO-Upper NY, Mr. Martin Lalsingh, GOPIO-Upper NY and Mr. Gurdatt Jagnanan, GOPIO-Upper NY)

Consul General, Mr. Sandeep Chakravorty welcomed and introduced the Consul Officials to all present. Consul General informed about the few improvements and changes implemented by the Consulate with regards to the CGI, NY website, wherein a section is now fully devoted to Community Affairs. He strongly recommended all to go through the website, contribute their suggestions and feedback for improvement. The Consulate is very active on social media and asked all to join the community group “ Friends of Consulate” on Facebook for updates and information on upcoming events, which will reduce complaints of people that they are no longer on the mailing list. Through the modern social media platform there is complete transparency on the Consulate’s activities and all people need to do is RSVP and attend the various events.

The main agenda/points discussed were:

- **Know India Programme (KIP):** A Power Point presentation was given by Consul (Pol) Mr. V. K. Mesariya explaining the main purpose and criteria of this program. KIP is a flagship initiative for Diaspora engagement which familiarizes Indian-origin youth with their Indian roots and contemporary India, through a three-week

orientation programme organized by the Ministry. The entire process of applying, processing etc. is now through an online portal (kip.gov.in), launched exclusively for KIP wherein the Indian-origin youth now submit their applications for participation in the KIP to the Indian Missions/Posts abroad. A maximum of 40 Indian Diaspora youth are selected for each programme and provided full hospitality in India. 90% of the total cost of international airfare is also paid by the Ministry.

The broad parameters and conditions were pointed out by CG:

- To cast net wide to get youth of the 3rd/4th generation youth born in US and who have not been to India before, as there have been cases where it turned out the people had travelled to India earlier and the very purpose of KIP is defeated.
- The age limit was clarified as; between 18-30 years
- This programme is good to keep the new generation connected to their Motherland.
- CG suggested that GOPIO should lead and take care of a part of this number (40) and the Consulate can approach other organizations for nominations.
- Most important is to have a gender balance with more number of women.
- Though the Indian population is concentrated in Tri state area, they should consider geographic /regional/ethnic distribution from areas other than Tri State.
- Though it's a tough call, we will not restrict but be flexible.
- It has been noticed and it's a reality that this generation kids do not speak our language, find it difficult to communicate, write English as their first language and do not need our food. Language *naturally* is the basis of our civilization; if we lose it then we lose our Indian culture.
- Hence requesting community organizations, principally GOPIO with this idea to connect them to India, then when they return and work in the Congress, Corporations and other fields, it will finally benefit the diaspora community.
- CG emphasized that the US passport holder is a US voter and the concept of alluring these people to India as these are important people who will affect the policies in this country. Our whole approach is that - best way to build relation is to influence people who influence policies in this country whether they are Americans or Indians, does not matter.
- CG elaborated that KIP is built on a program we had been running in India for past 50 years known as ITEC- the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program is a fully-funded program run by the Government of India with the goal of encouraging cooperation & partnership among developing countries, for mutual benefit. We have been taking foreigners in our programs for short courses and scholarship programs and those have been very successful. As a result, there is now a visible and growing awareness among other countries about the competence of India as a provider of technical know-how and expertise as well as training opportunities, consultancy services and feasibility studies. We have had many Presidents and Prime Ministers who have studied in India, best example being President of Afghanistan, Ahmed Karzai, and many such examples. It is an Investment which every country makes in having foreign

country students and young people. It is very good and successful program and has now been extended in form of KIP to attract Indian origin youth.

Dr. Thomas Abraham inquired if they could revert to EAM's office with regard to:

- Considering the 3rd/4th generation criteria for 2nd/3rdas Indians migrated in early 1960's and we may not get the results that we are looking at.
- Keep the condition as not visited India as a teenager and not as a small child of 4-5 years with parents, as we want to cultivate India in them.
- Follow the model of Israel of sending the Jewish Youth; we will be able to build up the strong foundation.

The CG replied that though priority would be given to 3rd/4th generation youth, Consulate would understand and be flexible in the conditions mentioned.

- **Emergency Assistance to Community with regard to Consular Services:** Consul (CPV) addressed by informing –
 - About the various camps being held in the Consulates jurisdiction, "Consulate at the Doorstep" the information is updated on the website.
 - 24/7 emergency number also available on the website in case of extreme emergencies
 - Emergency Consular Services are rendered at the Consulate on weekends and people can directly visit
 - Computer and printer sets have been installed for applicant use at the Consulate premises
 - As our numbers are huge and being the biggest Consulate in the world we cannot claim to be 100% correct at all times but are bound to make mistakes. We cannot hide behind satisfaction, our mistake maybe 1% but to the person who has suffered it may amount as 100%. If we come across someone who is not satisfied or getting the service may write directly to CGI team and we would be happy to respond, meet separately/individuallyto address the issues.

Dr. Abraham conveyed that GOPIO was happy with the consular services provided by the Consulate.

- **Joining hands with the Indian Consulate:** Dr. Abraham informed that GOPIO is open to hosting and organizing Health talks, meetings of academics, science and tech professionals, Indian youth and young professionals in collaboration with the Consulate.
- Consul General reciprocated the thought and welcomed the suggestion.

Mr. Prakash Shah of GOPIO Intl Chamber of Commerce (GICC) spoke about joining hands with the Consulate to host an Indian business delegation. He informed that he has been receiving emails regarding delegation visits from India and requested a intimation much in advance about VIP delegation visits as too short a time is given to organize hosting them.

CG suggested having one on one meeting with Consul trade for future programmes. CG replied that Consulate also gets information at short notice from India.

- **CG sought attention and support from GOPIO on growing cases and major issues of Marital Dispute and Domestic Violence/Abuse:** CG cited cases of Domestic Violence as a delicate matter and our intervention can irreparably damage the situation and CGI finds it difficult to intervene even though we consider it as our moral liability. Parents back home in India pressurize and complicate matters.
 - Need assistance from GOPIO to set a panel of lawyers as we do not understand the US laws.
 - We do take help of empaneled NGO but need significant support from community and none of the community organizations have women support wing.
 - We have been rescuing such women with help from police and local authorities, purchasing tickets and sending them to India.
 - Law is being passed in India by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) which has decided that people who do not answer summons or appear in courts their names will be put on MEA website and be given 3 chances, then the property of that person will be attached.

Dr. Abraham directed the attention to Ms. Sudha Acharya, Executive Director of South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS) who conveyed that their services are limited to:

- Educate and advise on health services and other benefits available apart from advice on Insurance formalities.
- Provide senior support and workshops on healthy living and emotional wellness
- Run the only South Asian food pantry service from Flushing office
- They direct the DV cases to NGO's like Manavi and Sakhi or organizations such as Domestic Foundation in Long Island, Turning point for Muslim women for further assistance as per the requirement.

Consul (Community Affairs) K. Devadasan Nair brought the issue of needing help from our community organization for NRIs, especially the newly married brides having family problems. The Consulate receives calls every day in this regard and suggested GOPIO to help set up mechanism of having family lawyers and counselors to help in such cases.

He further pointed out that the victims are unhappy when they get re-directed and feel that they are being passed on, whereas Manavi Inc. and such NGO's themselves take up the matter and these women feel comforted. These cases need continuous monitoring and have to be supported legally and they also need someone who could listen to them and comfort them. First and foremost requirement is of counseling.

Dr. Sayed suggested of setting up a counsel Psychologists team, conducting open houses at available places, have hotlines who would then report these cases to appropriate agencies.

GOPIO-North Jersey President Rajul shah highlighted her work with Indian seniors' loneliness. CG Chakravorty mentioned about a good program in Ohio for Indian seniors.

GOPIO Life Member Harbachan Singh drew attention of the India Conference 2018, which he attended, held at Boston at the Harvard Business School and the Harvard's Kennedy

School on Feb.10-11, 2018. He said that as in previous years the 15th India Conference 2018 was organized by the graduating students at Harvard University in a highly professional manner. Over 500 participants attended from all over USA and even some from India. The theme for the 2018 India Conference was “Disruptive innovations in the last few years”. CG Chakravorty said he was impressed by Boston’s Indian Conference. He further said that there should be such an event in New York too, may be at Columbia University. Houston Indian conference was done with community involvement.

Dr. Dayashankar Vidyalkar spoke on the values of Yoga and the merit of working in cooperation in everyday life.

CG Chakravorty said about Indian Consulate is joining hands with New York’s Children Museum. He also mentioned about upcoming program hosting some classical musicians at the Indian Consulate on April 18, 2018. The Indian Consulate’s various programs are attended many people in the New York area.

Ms. Hemal Dhavlikar asked about the Consulate’s involvement and what kind of support the Consulate needs: Fund based or Physical assistance.

Dr. Abraham reciprocated by assuring to approach professionals in the community for their services and revert after couple months.

Dr. Thomas Abraham introduced the GOPIO Members from the Tri- State area and heads of various chapters and thanked the Consulate for having them.

Wrapping up the meeting, CG thanked GOPIO members, had a group picture and assured further such interactions.

The meeting concluded with refreshments.