



PRESS RELEASE

Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2020

New York was one of the eight stations selected by the Ministry of External Affairs for celebration of Global Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) on Thursday, January 09, 2020. On this occasion, Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister (EAM) addressed the Indian diaspora and interacted with the Indian community through video conferencing located in Consulate General of India, New York, selected for the interaction with EAM. The interaction began with the EAM paying tribute to the late Smt. Sushma Swaraj by recognizing her unique contribution and tireless work for the Indian diaspora and those working and traveling abroad. EAM also emphasized the role of the 30 million Indians living in various countries around the world and how their contributions have enhanced India's standing in the world.

3. After his initial remarks, EAM has interacted with members of India diaspora. Each selected Mission was requested to ask two questions to the EAM. From New York, Mr. Vivek Patel, who raised US\$ 1.1 million through Facebook to help families of martyrs of Pulwama terror attacks and Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman GOPIO, asked the questions. Mr. Vivek Patel asked that, "How can we transfer charitable donations from members of Indian Diaspora to India? Is it possible for Indian Embassy or Consulate to facilitate this transfer of donations to India? We have been facing several hurdles in doing so". Replying to this question, EAM has conveyed that as of now the best and safest way to transfer any

donation to India is through the Indian Embassies and Consulates. He also added that, he will discuss this matter with Ministry of Finance for availability of better option in future.

4. Dr. Thomas Abraham asked that – “Government of India has taken several steps to reach out to Indian Diaspora overseas. However, there is lot of mis-perception and misunderstanding about the Sikh community abroad? Can you please elaborate on what steps Government of India is taking to address the issues related to Sikh community?” To which the EAM replied that– Government of India has no mis-perceptions about the Sikh community, they are extraordinary intelligent, hardworking and patriotic Community in India and abroad. He praised the community and highlighted various initiatives taken by Government of India such as issue Passport and Consular services to political asylees of Sikh origin as well as their family members and removing hurdles which prevent them to visit India. The EAM also highlighted the recent steps taken to preserve the sanctity of the Sikh faith such as restoration of the historic town of Sultanpur Lodhi, worldwide celebrations on the occasion of 550th Birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji being organized by Missions and Posts abroad, new train which runs across the historic places linked to Guru Nanak Devji, development of the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor etc. He also assured that present Govt. is committed to bring perpetrators of atrocity of 1984 to Justice. Some cases of 1984 anti-Sikh riots which were closed have now been reopened and re-investigated. Govt. is also looking at the aspect of compensation as well as extending legal aid to the affected people of 1984 violence.

5. Followed by interaction with EAM, CGI, New York has organized a PBD celebration in which twenty one individuals from various organizations/fields were recognized for their outstanding service to the community. They are – Mr. Niraj Antani (State Representative Columbus Ohio); Mr. Sanjay Chaubey (Lawyer, President of the Indo-American Lawyers Association); Mr. Avinash Gupta (Shree Siddhivinayak Temple of USA/ Indian Cultural & Community Center); Mr. Manish Ingle (Council of Indian Organizations in Greater Philadelphia); Dr. Neeta Jain (Member of Indian Community, Democratic District Leader, New York Assembly District 25 Part B, Queens); Mr. Ramakrishna Kasarla (FIA, Central Ohio); Ms. Sushma Kotahwala (AIA); Dr. Renee

Mehrra (Media personality); Mr. Lal Motwani (GOPIO); Mr. Mohan Nannapaneni (TeamAid); Friends of MP NYNJ (Community organization); Mr. Harinder Singh Panaser (President, US South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation (SAARK) Business Forum); Mr. Minesh C. Patel (Former President of Gujarati Samaj of NY); Mr. Vivek Patel (Member of Indian Community, He collected about USD\$1.1 million on Facebook for the families of the Pulwama terror attack); Mr. Daniel Rajaiah (Former Executive Director, Indian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky); Mr. Jitesh Rohatgi (Member of Indian Community, Founder Member of the Indian American Political Action Committee of Lehigh Valley); Mr. Jagdish Sewhani (American India Public Affairs Committee, NY); Mr. Nikhil Shah, (India Association of Rhode Island); Dr. Prasad Srinivasan (MILAN); Mr. Ankur Vaidya (FIA, NYNJCT); Mr. Nitin Vyas (World Vegan Vision).

6. More than 110 prominent members of the Indian diaspora attended the event.

New York

January 15, 2020