



The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin

GOPIO International

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GOPIO ACTIVITIES FROM MARCH 2016 TO DEC. 2017 AS COVERED IN GOPIO NEWS

GOPIO INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

GOPIO BAHRAIN PREPARING FOR GOPIO INTL. CONVENTION 2018

GOPIO Convention will be held for the first time in The Middle East, after holding conventions in New York, London, Paris, Zurich, Trinidad, South Africa, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, GOPIO International is holding its Biennial Convention 2018 - Bahrain on January 6-8, 2018 and concluding with a Desert tour scheduled for January 9th.



GOPIO Bahrain team has picked up Gulf Hotel, Manama, Bahrain as the venue for GOPIO Biennial Convention. GOPIO will also hold its Annual General Body Meeting on Jan. 6th, which will consider many bylaws amendments.

Bahrain's Energy Minister, Dr. Abdul Hussain Mirza welcomed the decision of GOPIO to hold the convention in the Gulf kingdom.

"Govt. of India organizes 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' every other year to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India to lead the non-violent movement against the British to gain Indian Independence and we want to commemorate the same on his return date in January next year," said Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of GOPIO International.

Members of GOPIO and leaders of several countries, will be among the 500+ delegates arriving in Manama for the three-day conference, which has the support of the governments of India and Bahrain. Minister Dr. V.K. Singh will be the Chief Guest at the inauguration of the convention Jan. 6th evening.

Massive global support has been pouring in for the proposed Pravasi Sammelan of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and People of Indian Origin (PIOs) to be held in Bahrain from January 6 to 9, 2018 at the Gulf Hotel Convention Center.

Shri Alfons Kannanthanam, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Culture, and Tourism, Government of India, will inaugurate the GOPIO International Convention on January 6th evening followed by the presentation of the Indian Women Achievers Samman, a collaboration of GOPIO and NRI Achievers Magazine.

GOPIO's Global Ambassador and Convention Convener Sunny Kulathakal who called on to Union Minister of State for External Affairs Dr. V.K. Singh during his trip in November. Kulathakal also met several other political leaders in India and invited them to the convention.



Photos from l. to r.: Sunny Kulathakal with Minister Dr. V.K. Singh, BJP General Secretary Muralidhar Rao and with Maharashtra Assembly Chief Whip Raj Purohit last month.

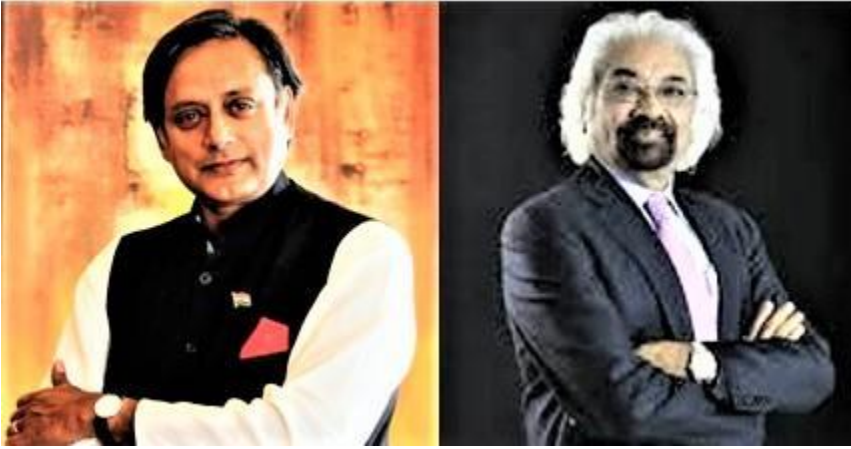
"The Bahrain convention will live up to GOPIO's role as a strategic networking platform for Indian businessmen globally," Kulathakal further added.

On January 7th, Dr. Shashi Tharoor, former External Affairs Minister and top leaders of BJP - the ruling party of India will address delegates coming from nearly 30 countries.

On evening of the same day, the Global Indian Businessmen Award will be given in collaboration with GOPIO and Business India Magazine, a 37-year-old publication from Delhi.

Mr. Chandan Mitra, Editor, The Pioneer and former MP, Mr. Muralidhar Rao, National General Secretary, BJP and Mr. Nalin Kohli, BJP Spokesman, have agreed to be speakers at different sessions.

Mr. Sam Pitroda, the Global Telecommunications Exponent will conduct a detailed session with the delegates on January 8th.



Dr. Shashi Tharoor and Sam Pitroda as speakers at the convention.

Former Prime Ministers, former Heads of State, and members of the House of Lords are expected to attend the three-day conference.

"Since 1989, GOPIO has taken several issues confronting the Diaspora community to India and various other governments," said Niraj Baxi, President of GOPIO International.

GOPIO's Global Ambassador and Convention Convener and Convention Convener Sunny Kulathakal met Minister V.K. Singh, BJP General Secretary Muralidhar Rao, Maharashtra Assembly Chief Whip Raj Purohit and former minister Dr. Shashi Tharoor who have committed to speak at the Convention.

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TRAVEL AND HOTEL ARRANGEMENTS

Regarding the travel and visa arrangements our travel partner Dadabhai Travels will do everything possible to get the special rate to any destination. You may contact Mr. Aziz Gilitwala, Managing Director E-mail aziz@dadabhaitravel.com, Tel: +973-39614499 or naveen@dadabhaitravel.com, Tel: +973-39843283

UK and US Passport holders will get visa on arrival. Visit Bahrain Govt. website at <https://www.evisa.gov.bh/> or a private agency at <https://www.bahrainonlinevisa.com/application>. Others have send in the passport copy (1st and last pages) to the travel agent to arrange the visa, Contact: naveen@dadabhaitravel.com.

Near the Gulf Hotel where GOPIO Convention Team has made an agreement with a new hotel- Park Regis for rooms with \$70 for single occupancy and \$80 for double occupancy including tax and breakfast. The above rate will be available only up to 15th December 2017. You may book directly on line at www.parkregislotushotel.com. Should you require further assistance you can contact Asst. Director of Sales Mr. Usman Kiani, Tel: +973-36293777 (Mobile), E- mail: ados@parkregislotushotel.com or Shiju Nair, Tel: +973-39830603, E-mail: om@parkregislotushotel.com.

Delegates get free transport to the Gulf Hotel (Convention Centre) which is at a five minutes distance from Park Regis Hotel.

GOPIO DELEGATION DISCUSSES DIASPORA ISSUES WITH INDIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER SUSHMA SWARAJ

A delegation from GOPIO, the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (www.gopio.net and gopio.com), met with India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on September 24th in New York and discussed several Indian Diaspora issues and avenues of cooperation. The delegation was headed by GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham. Other members included GOPIO Intl Vice President Ram Gadhavi, Chief of Board of Advisors H.R. Shah, International Coordinator for North America Dr. Rajeev Mehta, GOPIO Intl. Chamber of Commerce Co-Chairman Prakash Shah, New York Area Coordinator Lal Motwani, GOPIO-Connecticut Past President Shelly Nichani, GOPIO-New York President Beena Kothari, GOPIO-North Jersey

President Rajul Shah, Health Council Chair Dr. Asha Samant, Science/Tech Council Chair Shailesh Naik and Media Council Chair Nami Kaur.



Photo above - Minister Sushma Swaraj in discussion with GOPIO Delegation. From l. to r. Minister Swaraj, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO's Chief of Board of Advisors H.R. Shah and GOPIO-North Jersey President Rajul P. Shah

GOPIO delegation brought the following issues to the Minister Swaraj:

PIO youth participation in Know India Program (KIP) from the developed countries (currently only PIO countries have larger participation) - GOPIO asked for a program in the Summer (July/August) timeframe.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, 2019 and GOPIO's Active Participation - GOPIO provided the largest Overseas Indians registration at the last PBD. GOPIO has the largest network among NRIs/PIOs. GOPIO should be involved from the beginning for PBD-2019 planning. Minister agreed to have representative in every pre-planning meeting of PBF 2019.

Launch of GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) - Launched in Mumbai this year on Jan. 10th and inaugurated in New York on April 28th. GOPIO would like to work closely with her ministry to develop this global Indian business people network.

Demonetization Issue- OCIs and PIOs are still holding demonetized currencies since RBI did not allow them to deposit and Diaspora Indians have close to Rs. 7,500 crores still lying with them in small amounts. What should the NRIs do with the old currencies? Minister Swaraj informed that the Govt. had provided the time window for NRIs who are Indian citizens to deposit their currencies earlier. However, that window was not open for Diaspora Indians with foreign citizenship and the government would not be able to provide another such chance.

Aadhaar Card policy confusion for NRIs - NRIs do not have Aadhaar card for linking with their bank accounts. Minister Swaraj clarified that NRIs won't require Aadhaar card to operate their bank accounts. GOPIO suggested that Indians citizen living anywhere in the world should have an Aadhaar card similar to all US citizens having a social security number, whether staying in the US or outside.

The Middle East NRI issues - NRIs stuck in the Middle East, returned NRIs without any opportunities in India, etc. - GOPIO complimented Minister Swaraj and the Indian Missions worldwide for their pro-active role in helping Indians living outside India in time of distress. However, as more Middle East NRIs are returning home, we need to develop programs to help resettle them.

Minister Swaraj said that there are many programs for skills development as well as money available from different ministries for starting a business or technology related outfit. GOPIO offered to be facilitator between the returned NRIs and the government.

Diaspora Women's Issues - GOPIO, like Indian Missions, take a proactive role on issues of Indian women in the western countries especially the newlyweds who arrive in their new adopted lands and find themselves in financial distress or other crisis mode.

NRI/PIO Participation in Make in India, Clean India, Pooling/Transferring New Technologies for India, etc. - GOPIO can be catalyst to motivate participation of the Diaspora to collaborate with Indian professional and community groups to find creative solutions in these arenas.

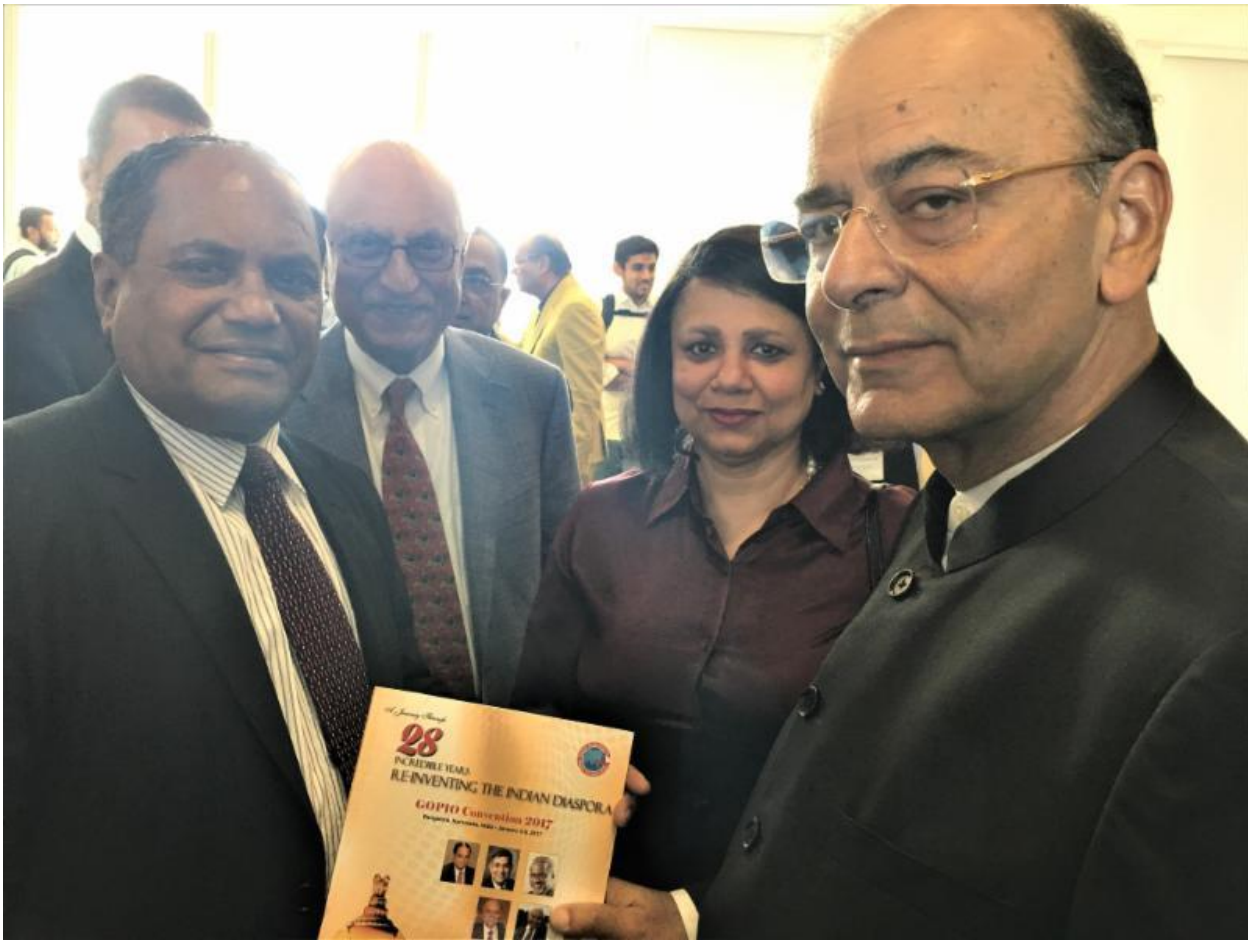
Consul General of India in New York Sandeep Chakravorty also participated in the meeting which ended with a positive discussion on how GOPIO can play an instrumental role to support the Indian Government's objectives with respect to their nationals living abroad. Minister Swaraj encouraged the GOPIO officials to continue engagement with their local congressmen and other legislative officials to advocate for the Diaspora rights and position within their adopted homelands.



Photo above - GOPIO delegation with Minister Sushma Swaraj, Sitting: from l. to r.: H.R. Shah, Minister Swaraj, Ram Gadhvi; Standing: from l. to r.: Dr. Asha Samant, Lal Motwani, Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Prakash Shah, Shelly Nichani, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Rajul Shah, Beena Kothari, Shailesh Naik, Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty and Nami Kaur

GOPIO INTERACTS WITH MINISTER ARUN JAITLEY AND MEMBERS OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT IN NEW YORK ON AADHAAR CARD FOR NRIs AND DEMONETIZATION ISSUES

GOPIO officials had an opportunity to meet Minister Arun Jaitley in New York and brought his attention on the demonetization issue which has affected millions of OCI card holders and Diaspora Indians with foreign citizenship who are still holding demonetized currencies. When he was told that between 7,500 to 10,000 crores are still lying with OCIs and PIOs, Minister Jaitley was surprised to hear this fact. GOPIO also brought the issue of Aadhar Card and suggested that all Indian citizens irrespective of whether they live in India or outside must be issued an Aadhaar Card.



Presenting a copy of GOPIO book to Minister Jaitley in New York. From l. to r.: GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Life Member Viresh Sharma and GOPIO-CT President Anita Bhat

MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT

GOPIO officials including GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, International Coordinator for North America Dr. Rajeev Mehta and GICC Co-Chairman Prakash Shah were in attendance at a one-to-one Interactive Meeting hosted by the Indian Consulate in New York on Friday, October 22nd. Organized by Indian Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty, the following members of Indian Parliament were present.

Mr. T.K.S. Elangovan

Dr. K. Kamaraj

Mr. Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu

Mr. Raghav Lakhanpal

Mr. Bhatruhari Mahtab

Mr. A.P.Jhiterndra Reddy

Mr. Anil Gulabrao Shirole

Mr. Harshvarsh Narayan Singh

Mr. Kodikunnel Suresh

Deputy Consul General Paramita Tripathi made a presentation of the history and role played by the Indian Consulate in New York, Govt, of India's subcontractor Cox and Kings also made a presentation. In the interactive session, GOPIO brought some of the current issues faced by the Diaspora Indians as follows:

NRI AND PIO ISSUES

Presented by Global Organization of People of Indian Origin to Members of Indian Parliament

1. Demonetization Issue - Millions of OCI card holders and Diaspora Indians with foreign citizenship are still holding demonetized currencies (between 7,500 to 10,000 crores) since they were not allowed to deposit them during the extended period of Jan. 1st to June 30th. GOPIO asked a pointed question on what to do with these currencies?

2, On October 21st, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a clarification, saying that the linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts is mandatory under prevention of money-laundering rules. The central bank was responding to news reports that quoted an RTI reply on linking Aadhaar by Dec. 31st, 2017. However, Govt, of India, Ministry of Finance had issued a press release on April 5th. 2017 saying that Aadhaar Card needs to be linked for income tax filing only for those who are eligible to obtain the card. See a copy of the press release below. However, no statement has been issued whether NRIs need to link bank accounts with Aadhaar card.

NRIs are not currently eligible to get an Aadhaar Card. GOPIO suggests that all Indian citizens irrespective of staying in India or outside must be given Aadhaar card similar to the Social Security Number issued to all American citizens living in the US or outside.

Real estate issues - Many NRIs have not been able to get hold off the apartment/house for which they have paid, especially in places like Noida and Gurgaon. Their inherited properties are also being taken over by unsuspecting relatives and others in connivance with local officials.



Photo: Members of Indian Parliament interacting with GOPIO officials at a meeting hosted by Indian Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty in New York

Readers are welcome to send in any other broad community issues to be taken up with Govt. of India to gopio@optonoine.net.

GOPIO JOINED HANDS WITH CCS UNIVERSITY AND INDIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION ORGANIZING A CONFERENCE ON INDIAN VISION OF POLITICAL THINKING

GOPIO Academic Council joined hands with Chaudhary Charan Singh (CCS) University and Indian Political Science Association (IPSA) for a conference **Indian Vision of Political Thinking: Possibilities of Global Alternative** on August 12th and 13th at the university. The conference focused on understanding the dynamics of changing academic paradigm emanating from global failure of Western political thinking in providing solutions to international problems of mankind.



The conference was inaugurated on 12th morning with welcome address by the organizer Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, General Secretary and Treasurer of IPSA who is also a Life Member of GOPIO. The Guest of Honor was Shri Rajendra Agarwal, Member of Parliament from Meerut-Hapur constituency. Keynote address was delivered by IPSA President Prof. Sushma Yadav, who is a member of University Grants Commission and also professor at Public Policy and Governance, IIPA, New Delhi. The Chief Guest at the event was GOPIO chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham who spoke on the influence and contribution of the Indian Diaspora for Indian political thinking from Independence movement to the contemporary Indian policies such as liberalization on the 1990s. CCS University Vice Chancellor Narendra Kumar Taneja delivered the Presidential Address.



Photo above: Inaugural session of the conference: IPSA Secretary/Treasurer Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Shri Rajendra Agarwal MP, Vice Chancellor Narendra Kumar Taneja, GOPIO chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham and IPSA President Prof. Sushma Yadav.

The conference continued for the rest of the day and next day. The sub-themes were as follows

1. Prevalent Global Streams of Political Thinking
2. Indian Vision of Political Thinking.
3. Profiling Inherent Indian Political Thought.
4. International Alternative Models of Political Thinking.
5. Possibilities of Indian Alternatives in Political Thinking.
6. Role of Indian Diaspora in Indian Political Thinking.

Contact: Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Secretary and Treasurer, Indian Political Science Association, Professor and Head Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut-250 005 (U.P.) India. Email:- ipsaconferencemeerut@gmail.com, Cell:- +91-9412205348

GOPIO INTERNATIONAL TO HOLD BIENNIAL CONVENTION IN BAHRAIN

GOPIO International will hold its biennial conference in Manama, Bahrain, January 7-9, 2018.

Members of GOPIO and leaders of several countries, will be among the 500+ delegates arriving in Manama for the three-day conference, which has the support of the governments of India and Bahrain.

Bahrain's Energy Minister, Dr. Abdul Hussain Mirza welcomed the decision of GOPIO to hold the convention in the Gulf kingdom.

Sunny Kulathakal, GOPIO's Global Ambassador and Chief Convener of the event, appreciated Dr Mirza's support for the global event that brings together delegates from 40 countries.

Dr. Thomas Abraham, the New York based Chairman of GOPIO stated "The overseas Indians' convention also commemorates the return of Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to lead the independence struggle on January 9, 1915. Since the Government of India has planned to conduct Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to mark Gandhi's return every alternate year, GOPIO gets that slot for 2018."

Some of the distinguished speakers will be Sam Pitroda, a pioneer in telecommunications and Information Technology, Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Member of Indian Parliament and former federal minister, Lord Billimoria, Lord Dilgit Rana. Prime Minister of Ireland, Leo Varadkar, former prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Ms. Kamala Persad Bissessar and former prime minister of Fiji, Mahendra Chaudhary.

According to Sunny Kulathakal, "The Bahrain convention will live up to GOPIO's role as a strategic networking platform for Indian businessmen globally."



Photo above: Participants at a meeting organized by GOPIO-Bahrain Chapter with GOPIO's Global Ambassador Sunny kulathakal (third from left), GOPIO International Secretary Dr. Sai Giridhar, Bahrain Chapter President Dr. George Cherian and other members at a lunch meeting at K-Hotel.

GOPIO DELEGATION INTERACTS WITH INDIAN ELECTION COMMISSION ON NRI VOTING

A delegation from the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) International headed by its Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham Along with Indian community groups interacted with Indian's election commission at a meeting hosted by Acting Consul General of India Parmita Tripathi in New York at the Indian Consulate. Attended by Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha and Deputy Election Commissioner Dr. Sandeep Saxena, who are on a US tour to get feedback from the Indian community. The commissioners explained the Election Commission's plan to implement voting for Indian citizens living outside India. The Election Commission (EC) estimates that there are 16 million Indian citizens living outside of which about 70 percent are eligible to vote. Two current proposed plans for implementing NRI voting in Indian elections are for NRIs to register at the EC website and one way postal voting (i.e. download the ballot and send it by post) or secondly by proxy voting in India.

GOPIO and other community leaders welcomed the effort from EC and agreed to publicize and reach out to the Indian citizens to register for voting. The larger number of Indian citizens living outside are in the US schools as students and IT professionals. The IT company representatives present at the meeting committed to help the EC in this regard to reach out IT professionals.

Many present at the meeting voiced their opinion that Overseas Citizen of Indian (OCI) should be upgraded to Dual nationality. GOPIO had passed resolution for Dual Nationality as early as 1989 at the Frist Global Convention of People of Indian Origin where GOPIO was formed. Voting Rights to NRIs has been another resolution from GOPIO. GOPIO further

suggested that a proper representation must be provided to NRIs in the Indian Parliament, may be by abolishing the reserved seats for Anglo Indians since they are already well integrated and settled in the Indian society and those seats are reserved for the unrepresented Indian citizens living outside India.



Photo: Indian Election Commission members with GOPIO delegation and other community organization representatives.

GOPIO CONDUCTS SUCCESSFUL US LAUNCH OF ITS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN NEW YORK - CHAPTERS TO BE INITIATED ALL OVER THE WORLD

GOPIO, the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (www.gopio.net), together with the New York Consul General of India, announced the USA launch of GOPIO's International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) at the Indian Consulate in New York on April 28, 2017. GICC was inaugurated earlier at India's business capital in Mumbai on Jan. 10, 2017 by the Governor of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu Shri Vidyasagar Rao.

Honored chief guest Mrs. Riva Ganguly Das, Consul General of India and GOPIO's elected GOPIO officials hosted this event for the Indian Diaspora of the New York Tri-State region. The inauguration event was attended by approximately 150 members of the NRI (Non-Indian Resident) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) community. The Networking Cocktail started at 6:30 pm, followed by the Launch Ceremony at 7:00pm and Dinner at 8:15pm.

Master of Ceremony Prakash Shah, Co-Chair of GICC kicked off the event, with introductory remarks, "GOPIO has tapped into a long-felt need for an international networking organization for the business People of Indian Origin. GICC has gotten off to a flying start after the January 10, 2017 global launch in Mumbai (India) by the Maharashtra Governor, with requests from around the world pouring in to open GICC chapters in all the major cities". Shah stated GICC objectives as, "GICC aims to bring together the business people of the Indian Diaspora, providing them the networking opportunity on a common worldwide platform."

Indian Consul General Riva Ganguly Das welcomed the attendees to the Consulate for the US launch of GICC, commenting "GOPIO is the only organization that truly represents the interests of the worldwide 30 million Indian Diaspora." She praised this latest GOPIO venture launch remarking, "GOPIO's GICC initiative is most timely and very much needed at this time."

Other speakers included H. R. Shah, Chair of the GICC launch; GOPIO Life Member and Parikh Media Chairman Dr. Sudhir Parikh and New Jersey Assemblyman Raj Mukherji.

H R Shah, this year's recipient of Padma Shri award from Indian President, who Chairs the GOPIO's Board of Advisors and is Chairman of TV Asia, quoting a number of key statistics on Diaspora businesses explained why an effort such as GICC was very much needed. Mr. Shah also served as the GICC Launch Chair.

Event sponsor State Bank of India (SBI) was represented by senior officers at the launch. SBI's new USA Country Head Ashwini Tewari said that SBI fully supports GOPIO efforts and SBI see great opportunity ahead to work with Indian owned businesses.

Dr. Thomas Abraham Chairman of GOPIO International presented the details of GICC including the genesis of GICC, "The Biennial Convention in 2016 held in New York became a corner stone for GOPIO to be more involved in business, technology, investment and philanthropic activities to mobilize Diaspora resources for the common good. At this meeting, GOPIO General Body decided to initiate GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) as a business platform for the Indian Diaspora."

"GOPIO International is the most networked Indian Diaspora organization which is a brand, and unlike other chambers, GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) will cater to the Indian Diaspora businesses and entrepreneurs and will be the only globally networked Indian Chamber of Commerce," Dr. Abraham added.



Photo above: GICC USA launch with lighting of the lamp, from l. to r.: GOPIO Upper New York President Jhairam Persaud, GOPIO North Jersey Vice President Rajul Shah, GOPIO's Tri-State New York Area Coordinator Lal Motwani, Parikh Media Chairman Dr. Sudhir Parikh, GOPIO Intl. Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Intl. Coordinator Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Consul General Riva Ganguly Das, GOPIO-New York President Beena Kothari, AIA President Govind Munjal, Assemblyman Raj Mukherjee, GICC Co-Chair Prakash Shah and GOPIO-CT President Anita Bhat

GICC would serve as a non-geographical chapter of GOPIO International and will create worldwide networking opportunity for people of Indian origin in business and professional services. As there are over 3 million businesses owned by People of Indian Origin around the world within the Indian Diaspora of 30 million, GICC provides a great opportunity for one to become a Sponsor Member or Life Member. GICC will encourage and promote increasing levels of business investments by and among NRI/PIOs in various parts of the world.

GICC will reach out and set up chapters in neighborhoods with large number of Indian owned businesses and services. It will also launch chapters in small towns, cities, counties, states/provinces and countries. Hopefully GICC will emerge as the most networked Indian Diaspora business group. Unlike other chambers, GICC's biggest advantage and benefit to its members and chapters will be that it will be the most globally networked Indian Diaspora business group.

The launch program was put together by GOPIO's Tri-State New York Area Coordinator Lal Motwani and GOPIO New York President Beena Kothari and was supported by other GOPIO Chapters in the New York area; GOPIO-Upper New York, GOPIO-Connecticut, GOPIO-Central Jersey and GOPIO-North Jersey. The event was sponsored by the State Bank of India in New York



Photo: GOPIO officers and State Bank of India officers after the GICC launch in New York, from l. to r.: Dinesh Mittal, Dr. Asha Samant, Shailesh Naik, Nami Kaur, Shelly Nichani, Kenny Desai, H.R. Shah, Lal Motwani, SBI Country Head Ashwini Tewari, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Beena Kothari, SBI CEO R. Viswanathan, Varghese Ninan, Rajul Shah, Dr. Sudhir Parikh, GICC Co-Chair Prakash Shah, Meera Banta and Dharmatma Saran

Contact GICC Co-Chair Prakash Shah at +1.908.267.5021, e-mail at firstgrwth@aol.com or gopio@optonline.net.

GOPIO HOLDS CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR SRINIVAS KACHIBOTLA

GOPIO-Inland Empire chapter organized candlelight vigil in Riverside, California on March 5, 2017 in memory of Srinivas Kuchibhotla of Kansas. The main organizer was the chapter president Vasu Pawar.



Photo above: Candlelight Vigil by GOPIO Inland Empire Chapter, California.

GOPIO CHAIRMAN CONFRONTS RBI GOVERNOR URJIT PATEL FOR DISALLOWING DIASPORA INDIANS TO DEPOSIT THEIR DEMONETIZED CURRENCIES AT NEW YORK MEETING

Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham confronted Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Dr. Urjit Patel at a talk delivered by him at Columbia University on April 24th for not allowing Diaspora Indians with foreign citizenship to deposit or exchange their demonetized Indian currencies. GOPIO estimates that over Rs. 5,000 crores of demonetized currencies are in the possession of OCI card holders and those non-OCI card holders with foreign citizenship. Many travelling to India to deposit their currencies were turned away by RBI at five of its branches which still accept the demonetized currencies from NRIs who are Indian citizens.

"This is gross injustice to more than 50% of the overseas Indians who have been deprived of their hard-earned income," said Dr. Abraham.

In January 2017, GOPIO launched a PetitionOnline campaign appealing to Prime Minister of India to allow OCI/PIO card holders as well as Diaspora Indians with Foreign Citizenship to deposit or exchange their demonetized Indian currencies at the Reserve Bank of India. Currently, NRIs holding Indian Passport are only allowed to deposit or exchange the demonetized currencies at five Reserve Bank India branches in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Nagpur.

Dr. Abraham presented a copy of the issues and comments raised by Diaspora Indians through PetitionOnline. Several thousands of Diaspora Indians signed the petition which is still going on at www.gopio.net.

"This is a major issue for the Diaspora Indians and it is a created issue and it needs to be resolved," said GOPIO International President Niraj Baxi.



In a letter to RBI Governor Patel, GOPIO noted that It would be unfair of India to treat OCI card holders differently from NRIs for depositing their hard-earned demonetized currencies. Diaspora Indians with Foreign Citizenship, and PIO and OCI card holders be given the same opportunity for depositing old and obsolete currency notes as given to NRIs (Indian Passport holders), allowing them to deposit up to Rs. 250,000 of Indian currency in the Reserve Bank of India instead of notified amount of Rs. 25,000. RBI argument that OCI card holders may be used by those in India to convert their demonetized currencies falls apart since more NRIs have closer contacts with people in India than OCI hard holders, so why discriminate OCI card holders?

The letter further stated that some of the NRIs and PIO/OCI card holders have old currency notes safely kept in their residences in India for reasons such as education of their children in India, supporting old age parents, helping family members, etc., so allow RBI and Banks having NRO accounts to accept the old currency notes up to Rs. 2,50,000;

Dr. Abraham presented a copy of comments and feedback from several thousands of Indians worldwide to RBI Governor Urjit Patel to forward it to Prime Minister Modi

Finally, since all Diaspora Indians with Foreign Citizenship (PIO and OCI card holders) may not be able to visit India prior to June 30, 2017, they should be allowed to deposit old currency notes at either the Reserve Bank of India or in their NRO Accounts up to December 31, 2017.

"Indians who left India to earn their living should not be deprived of their hard-earned money because they were not in India to deposit the demonetized notes when Indian banks were accepting the notes," Dr. Abraham added.

GOPIO has appealed to Dr. Patel to resolve this issue quickly.

GOPIO's online signature campaign is still on. Please visit GOPIO website www.goopio.net and sign the petition at the link provided in the home

Attached herewith, please find feedback from Diaspora Indians on this issue ([Appeal to Prime Minister Modi and Feedback from those signed up](#)).

You could further write your concerns to the Prime Minister at www.narendramodi.in, Finance Minister at fm@finance.nic.in or Revenue Secretary at rsecy@nic.in.

GOPIO'S AFRICA BUSINESS SUMMIT A GREAT SUCCESS WITH A THEME INDIASPORA BUILDING AFRICA THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND FRONTIERS

GOPIO International together with the GOPIO Chapter of Durban in South Africa held a very successful and enlightening business conference for 2 and half days where attendees from many countries gathered to network, exchange ideas and come with suggestions to help South Africa progress to greater heights through Cooperation, Guidance and Entrepreneurship.

Mr. Ishwar Ramlutchman, Convention Convener and International Coordinator along with his team of volunteers did a wonderful job of planning, hosting and welcome of the delegates visiting from many countries. He had a line up of the Royalty and top Government officials who attended the various events and mingled with the guests.



Photo: GOPIO-Durban Convention team with (sitting l. to r.) Mr. A.V. Mohammed of Jumma Masjid Trust, Ishwar Ramlutchman and South Africa Member of the Parliament Aumsen Singh.

May 19th

Durban - For the GOPIO visitors from other countries, the convention started right at the airport. A delegation dressed in traditional Indian clothes received us with folded hands saying Namaskar. Pictures were taken in front of the Gopio banners announcing the Gopio convention and creating quite a stir among the onlookers. This was an excellent advertisement besides the television, radio and print ads, which had been running in Durban for weeks ahead of the summit.

Later the same afternoon, **Dr. Shashank Vikram**, the Consul General of India in Durban, invited the whole international delegation and prominent community members for high tea at the Indian Consulate and met with each one individually and welcomed us to South Africa.

As if that was not welcome enough a reception was held for all GOPIO members and local Indian dignitaries and business people to meet with the GOPIO visitors and local members at the hotel.



Photo above: Welcome Dinner Group Photo with dignitaries and GOPIO officials, from l. to r. GOPIO-Delhi/NCR President Dhiraj Ahuja, GOPIO Treasurer Kewal Kanda, South African Member of Parliament Aumsen Singh, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Indian Member of Parliament Dr. Udit Raj, GOPIO's Media Council Co-Chair Mini Guleria, GOPIO Exec. VP Noel Lal, Dhiano Das of Solarway GOPIO-Paris Nord President Mehen Poinosawmy and GOPIO International Coordinator and Convention Convener Ishwar Ramlutchman

Among the many welcome greetings and addresses, the ones that hit the spot were by

- a) **Mrs. Shameen Thakur-Rajbansi**, member of Parliament for Minority Front in Durban, South Africa. She brought forward the point that Indian Diaspora needs to be recognized and appreciated for the success they have achieved in foreign countries. And that GOPIO is a wonderful platform for PIOs/ NRIs for such acknowledgement and appreciation.
- b) **Dr. Udit Raj**, Member of Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha) who was visiting from New Delhi, emphasized that today India is a land of opportunity under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. He also extended the invitation to all Indians living abroad to come to India and his doors will be open to help them.
- c) **Dr. Thomas Abraham**, chairman GOPIO from the US made a power point presentation tracing the journey of GOPIO since its inception 28 years ago mobilizing the community as an activism group looking at the human rights violations to a group which is involved in all aspects of community development and contribution to India and other countries. GOPIO has now launched GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) where the GOIPO members can successfully network and utilize their membership to meet with other likeminded business people and entrepreneurs from all over the world.
- d) **GOPIO Executive Vice President Noel Lal** quoted Prime Minister Modi extolling diaspora Indians to commit and contribute to the countries they live in.
- e) **Mr. Ishwar Ramlutchman**, Africa International coordinator and convener for the GOPIO Business summit finished off with a very emotional vote of thanks, specially to those who have traveled from far of countries to visit his South Africa. He thanked his team for their tireless work of last few months to put the convention together. He finished off with very important message, " Let us all take something from this convention".

May 20th

The Business Summit was inaugurated on time at 9 am.



Photos above: People assembling for GOPIO Africa Business Summit in Durban, May 20, 2017. Deputy Mayor of Durban Mrs Fawzia Peer in the middle.

Many discussion panels were held covering the entire gamut of topics for helping **Africa Grow Through Entrepreneurship** and helping in the growth of Industries like **Hotel and Tourism, Small Scale Industries, Micro Credit Financing** to name a few.

Some of the local dignitaries who attended and spoke were Acting High Commissioner of India **Dr. S. Janakiraman**, Consul General of India **Dr. Shashank Vikram**, **Deputy Mayor of Durban Mrs Fawzia Peer**, and **Mr. Ravi Pillay, MEC for Rural Development and Public Works**.



Photos above Welcoming of KwaZulu-Natal King Goodwill Zwelithini: Left: King Goodwill Zwelithini with GOPIO Int'l Coordinator Ishwar Ramlutchman; Right: King conversing with Acting Indian HC Dr. S. Janakiraman, Indian Consul General Dr. Shashank Vikram and GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham

In the afternoon, the business summit was honored by the presence of **His Majesty the King Goodwill Zwelithini KaBhekuZulu** and her Highness. The King was pleased to be attending the summit and to be among Indians in particular. In his speech, he emphasized that ALL RELIGIONS should live together in harmony. South Africa, he said that today his people are called, **"The Rainbow Nation"**.



Photo above left: Indian Consul General Dr. Shashank Vikram, Acting Indian HC Dr. S. Janakiraman, King Goodwill Zwelithini, Her Highness, and GOPIO Executive VP Noel Lal; Photo above right: Session with the King. On the extreme right is GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham



Photo above: Conference Sessions in progress

Resolutions

This GOPIO International Business Summit, having taken place in the City of Durban, South Africa on Saturday, May 20th, 2017, and headlined on the conference theme, "Indiaspora Building Africa Through Opportunities Beyond Frontiers ", and inclusive off women empowerment and skills development in business, hereby resolves:

1. To adopt the spirit of the Durban Declaration for Social and Economic Prosperity and Peace in Africa, in which GOPIO International and Global Diaspora Indians will foster closer relations and initiate new vistas of economic cooperation with stakeholders, governments. non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and institutions.

Proposed by South Africa, Life Member, Marlan Padayachee, seconded by South Africa, Life Member, Michelle Michael, and unanimously passed by delegates.

2. Gopio International and the global business summit further resolves to call on the government of South Africa to facilitate new initiatives in business, investments, technology and education with the Diaspora Indians and to establish a close working relationship with Gopio International and its Chapters in South Africa for a partnership to contribute meaningfully and tangibly to the development of South Africa.

Proposed by South Africa, Life Member Marlan Padayachee, and seconded by Mauritius delegate and unanimously accepted by the delegates.

3. We hereby further resolve to thank and acknowledge His Majesty Zulu Monarch King Goodwill Zwelithini for his support of Gopio International's efforts and His Majesty's leadership and guidance to ongoing social and economic development and growth.

Proposed by South Africa, Life Member, Marlan Padayachee, seconded by South Africa, Life Member, Michelle Michael and unanimously passed by delegates.

Resolutions Session was presided by GOPIO International Chairman t Dr Thomas Abraham



Photo above: Some of the participants after pose for a photo after the concluding session.

GALA DINNER

VVIP list for the Gala dinner at the conclusion reads like who's who from the Durban area.

His majesty **King Goodwill Zwelithini** and her Highness, **Prince MG Buthelezi MP, A.V. Mohammed of Jumma Masjid Trust and Deputy High commissioner of India Dr. S. Janakiraman** and South African Member of Parliament **Aumsen Singh**.

The Gala dinner was a display of warmth, love and hospitality of the South African Indians. It seems the clock may have stopped for them, 3-4 generations ago when their ancestors landed in Durban as indentured labor on a ship. Today the success and their achievement is noteworthy and something to be proud of.



Photo above: Indian Ladies at the Finale Awards Banquet of GOPIO-Durban Business Summit

From lightening the traditional lamp to welcome speeches to fabulous array of dishes on the buffet table was a sight to be seen. Highlight was the plaques of recognition to professional and business achievers, the host committee team and the people who needed to be recognized for their service to the community and the growth of Indian heritage in general. The King was presented with the Life Time Achievement Award.

His majesty the King Goodwill Zwelithini himself stood on the dais and presented each and everyone with the plaque of recognition with a smile and handshake. He was seen having quite a chat with some of the dignitaries and visitors. In fact, he seemed to be enjoying himself immensely.



Photo above: GOPIO Convention Awardees with King Goodwill Zwelithini and GOPIO officials at the Durban Business Summit, May 20, 2017

In his speech, he again reiterated his comments, "It is a great pleasure to have been invited to express my message of support to such a great celebration of unity among people of Indian origin that is kept intact by the leadership and members of the GOPIO organization of the people of the Indian origin. We are aware that inculcating a culture of unity is difficult enough in a classroom or a community but when unity such as the one achieved by the Indian community on a global scale as pioneered by GOPIO has to be celebrated, Ubuntu dictates that I express my support."

May 21st

The highlight of the conference was a Visit to Mahatma Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement, hosted by Mrs. Ela Gandhi, the granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi. The delegates got to see and read information they have heard about from the history books.



Photo above: GOPIO Officials with Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter Ela Gandhi and Dr. Udit Raj, MP at Phoenix Ashram in Durban, South Africa. From l. to r. Dr. Raj, GOPIO EVP Noel Lal, Ela Gandhi, Michelle Michael, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham and Mini Guleria.



Photo above: GOPIO women with Mrs Ela Gandhi, Granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi Gandhiji's Phoenix Settlement Ashram

Original pictures and depiction of Mahatma Gandhi's life has been recorded chronologically with very nice photographs and inscriptions on the walls. The delegation was served wonderful vegetarian lunch and a plaque of appreciation was given to Mrs. Ela Gandhi by GOPIO team.

GOPIO CONDEMNS THE HATE CRIME ON US INDIANS IN THE STRONGEST TREM

The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) has condemned the recent shooting death of Indian American Srinivas Kuchibhotla of Kansas. GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham said that the "apparent hate crime" is vicious and GOPIO stands together with the victims' families at their time of distress.

The 32-year-old Indian engineer Kuchibhotla, who was working in aviation systems for Olathe-based Garmin Ltd, died after he was shot by navy veteran Adam Purinton who, according to witnesses, yelled "get out of my country" and "terrorist" at a bar on the night of February 22nd, 2017 before opening fire.

Kuchibhotla's colleague Alok Madasani, also an engineer from Hyderabad, was critically injured in the attack. Another bar patron, 24-year old Ian Grillot, who had tried to apprehend the gunman, was also injured in the shooting and reportedly put his life in risk to save the Indians.

"Our thoughts are with the victims and families shaken by the shooting in Kansas and we do not have place for senseless acts of violence in our country," said GOPIO President Niraj Baxi.

GOPIO news release stated that any act of violence fueled by hatred, xenophobia and prejudice cannot be tolerated. The local and federal law enforcement must investigate the shooting as a hate crime.

"The FBI and other state agencies must initiate quick legal proceedings against the murderer and the incident must be treated as a hate crime," said GOPIO Vice President Ram Gadhavi.

We also want White House to issue a statement against such senseless violence against immigrants who are legally in America and contribute to the economy of our country," said Dr. Rajeev Mehta, GOPIO's International Coordinator for North America.

Addressing the Joint Session of the US Congress, President Donald Trump condemned the shooting in Kansas.

GOPIO has also urged the community to sign the petition to the White House <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/indian-engineers-target-hate-crime>.

GOPIO Chapters have also planned Candlelight Vigils around the US. One such vigil has been planned in Riverside, Southern California by GOPIO-Inland Empire Chapter on March 5th.

GOPIO, with its many chapters in the USA and other parts of the world, has been working for the welfare of Diaspora Indians since 1989. It has taken up issues of the Indian Diaspora and has been promoting its interest and that of Indian around the world.

GOPIO REQUESTS YOU TO SIGN UP THE APPEAL TO PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA TO ALLOW DIASPORA INDIANS AND PIO/OCI CARD HOLDERS TO DEPOSIT OR EXCHANGE DEMONETIZED NOTES

AN APPEAL FROM GOPIO

Subject: Need your immediate help in this signature campaign

Dear all:

Diaspora Indians with foreign citizenship and OCI/PIO card holders are being turned away by Reserve bank of India from depositing their demonetized currencies, although govt. had announced that it has extended the date for NRIs to deposit their currencies till June 30th, 2017. However, Diaspora Indians with foreign citizenship after standing outside the gate for several hours and when they reach the gate, they have been told that only NRIs with Indian passport can go inside. It is a major issue to be corrected. GOPIO has now taken up this issue and has sent this appeal to Hon. Prime Minister Modi.

Indians who left India to earn their living should not be deprived of their hard earned money because they could not come during the period, Nov. 8th to December 30th, 2016. GOPIO has started a signature campaign requesting Prime Minister to allows Diaspora Indians to exchange or deposit their demonetized notes. Please see the news items below.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/us-canada-news/gopio-asks-pm-to-allow-diaspora-to-deposit-exchange-currency/articleshow/56892385.cms>

<http://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/gopio-asks-pm-modi-to-allow-diaspora-to-deposit-exchange-currency-4500017/>

<http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-gopio-asks-pm-to-allow-diaspora-to-deposit-exchange-currency-2302173>

GOPIO International Executive Council requests you to sign up this petition and forward this e-mail to your family members and friends (including in India) and request them to sign up and support this campaign. Please visit GOPIO website www.gopio.net and sign the petition at the link provided in the home page or click the link below.

https://www.change.org/p/prime-minister-of-india-allow-diaspora-indians-and-pio-oci-card-holders-to-deposit-or-exchange-demonetized-notes?recruiter=669342563&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=share_email_responsive

Attached herewith, please find feedback from Diaspora Indians on this issue ([Appeal to Prime Minister Modi and Feedback from those signed up](#)). If you read some of the comments, Diaspora Indians are sadden and frustrated. India should not short change them and ignore their request. They are the most reliable and valuable people India has around the world to promote India's interest. They are not asking for any favor. They just want their hard earned money to be exchanged or deposited in their NRO account or deposit this amount at a bank such as the the State Bank of India which is not far away from their home in India. That is a fair request. We hope that GOI will heed to this request.

Dr. Thomas Abraham
Chairman, GOPIO International

Niraj Baxi
President, GOPIO International



Photo above: People standing at the RBI Gate in New Delhi on January 10th, 2017

GOPIO INERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (GICC) LAUNCHED IN MUMBAI

A Gala function was held at the Garware Club in Mumbai on Jan. 10th at which the Governor of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu Shri Vidyasagar Rao inaugurated the launch of GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC). Applauding the formation of GICC, Governor Rao expressed confidence that GICC will have the most fruitful and

fulfilling engagement and will play a big role in the future of India and in connecting Businesses in India with Diaspora Businesses.

Addressing GOPIO delegates, Governor Rao said, "Success of Overseas Indians are due to their hard work and determination and you are making significant contribution to your adopted countries and at the same time contributing to India."

Governor Rao also suggested GOPIO to have an active Women's wing and a network for Indian youth and young professionals.

Global Organization of the People of Indian Origin or GOPIO currently headquartered in New York, having been founded by many Enterprising NRI's in 1989 and having developed 70 chapters in 30 countries around the world, did establish at its general body meeting in June 2016 in New York, a GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce or GICC to function worldwide as a networking organization for Indian businesses in the Diaspora.

Indian Diaspora, 30 million strong and well established over many decades has also established over 3 million businesses overseas. These overseas business ventures by People of Indian Origin represent the true entrepreneurial spirit of the Indian people.

GICC wishes to bring these diverse businesses spread throughout the world together onto one platform. GOPIO in establishing GICC is filling a void and a felt need. The interconnection opportunity is immense given GOPIO's already established network of connections

GICC through its networking and educational efforts and by eventually establishing chapters in various countries and many key cities throughout the world, wishes to encourage these businesses to harness their energies towards mutual advancement and benefit.

Such initiatives, it is believed will also assist and support the very massive transformation taking place in India today. India will hopefully benefit from the massive inputs from People of Indian Origin. Many new business growth opportunities will likely present themselves to the Diaspora Indians and to Resident Indians for mutual benefits.

The program hosted by the Federation of Associations of Maharashtra (FAM) and was organized by GOPIO Advisor Advocate Raj K. Purohit, MLA who is Chief Whip of Maharashtra Assembly.

"This is a great initiative to connect Indian businesses to the Indian Diaspora businesses, entrepreneurs and technologists," said Purohit.

FAM President Vinesh Mehta and GICC-Mumbai Chapter Coordinator Suresh Chokhanji welcomed the guests.

GOPIO President Niraj Baxi said that with 70 chapters in 30 countries GOPIO is uniquely positioned globally to connect Diaspora Indians and businesses with India and the world.

GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham said, "GOPIO International is the most networked Indian Diaspora organization which is a brand, and unlike other chambers, GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) will cater to the Indian Diaspora businesses and entrepreneurs and will be the only globally networked Indian Chamber of Commerce."

GOPIO Executive VP Noel Lal, based in Sydney, Australia said, "There are many developments and joint venture opportunities available in the Pacific Theatre and Indian companies can work with the Diaspora businesses to benefit from all the vast opportunities available."

GICC co-chair Prakash Shah envisages a mushrooming of collaborative efforts among Diaspora and between Diaspora and Resident Indian businesses that will assist further the transformative changes taking place in India to propel India as the dominant economy of the 21st Century - what PM Modi has called the Century of India.

Mr. Nitin Shah, former chairman of Asian American Hotel Owners Association and co-chair of GICC described the numerous ways in which GICC will integrate Diaspora businesses by forming chapters in many countries and in all the key cities of the world and by offering networking opportunities so that in future Indian companies can be the world leaders.

The program ended with a vote of thanks by GICC-Mumbai Co-Coordinator Vinod Juneja.



Photo above: Governor Vidyasagar Rao delivering inaugural address at the GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) launch in Mumbai on Jan. 10th. Sitting from l. to r.: Viinod Juneja, Suresh Chokhanji, Noel Lal, Raj Purohit, Niraj Baxi, Vinesh Mehta, Prakash Shah, Dr. Thomas Abraham and Nitin Shah

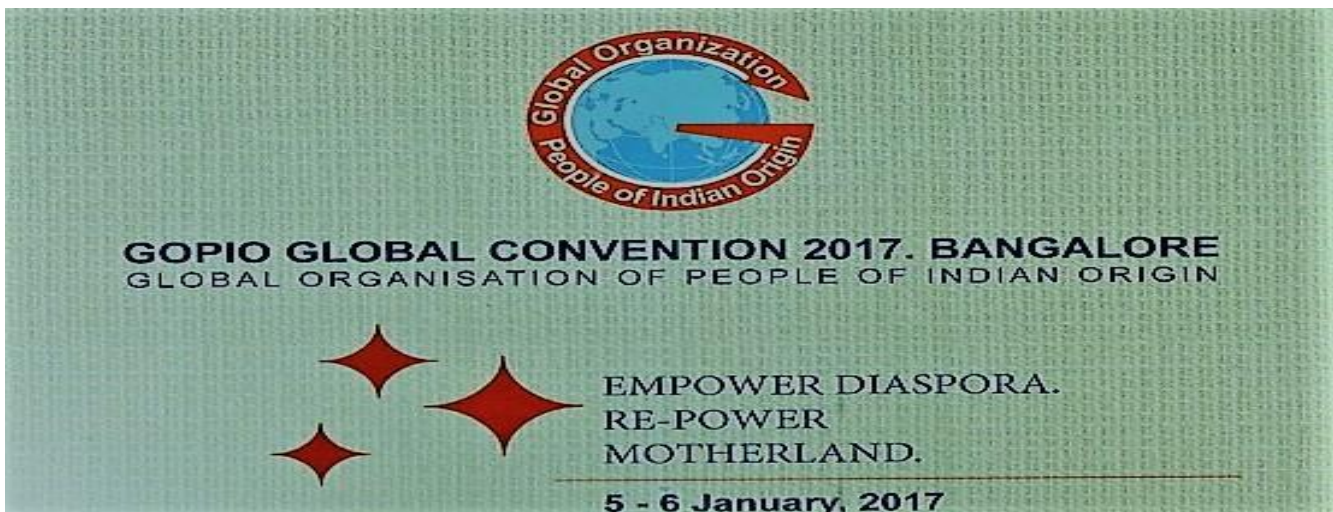
GOPIO International has planned a Global Indian Business summit on May 17-19, 2017 in Durban, South Africa.

For further Information, please contact Niraj Baxi, President, GOPIO International at +1.408.307.9845 or in India +91.98193.02221 or Prakash Shah at +1.908.267.5021, e-mail at firstgrwth@aol.com or gopio@optonline.net

GOPIO BANGALORE CONVENTION A GRAND SUCCESS - PASSES RESOLUTION ON DEMONETIZATION AFFECTING NRIs AND PIOs

The two-day convention of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) in Bangalore struck the right note in articulating the problems faced by the Diaspora. PIOs/NRIs from over 60 countries who gathered in Bangalore under the shadow of demonetization had the opportunity to exchange views on the diverse issues dogging Pravasis. Speaker after speaker mentioned the problem of cash crunch following the demonetization of Rs.1000 and 500 notes.

Through several sessions GOPIO managed to put across to the government the difficulties faced by NRIs/PIOs due to note ban. A resolution passed by GOPIO specifically requested the government to make the exchange of demonetized notes held by NRIs trouble-free.



Another issue that figured prominently in the discussions was the inadequate representation of GOPIO in the PBD event. GOPIO President Niraj Baxi and Global Ambassador Sunny Kulathakal aired GOPIO's disappointment over

the development. Minister of State for External Affairs M J Akbar who inaugurated the two-day convention promised to look into the complaint.

The idea 'GOPIO Means Business' got a boost in Bengaluru, brightening the prospect of broadening the business linkages of the Diaspora with the Motherland. Two sessions on start-ups while touching on the emerging scenario in the fastest growing sector, explored the possibilities of partnerships and investments by NRIs. The participants got a thorough briefing on the impending launch of GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC).



Minister M. J. Akbar inaugurated the convention on January 5. Addressing the gathering, Akbar appreciated the role of non-resident Indians (NRIs) and person of Indian origin (PIO) in strengthening relations between India and other countries. "India will have its first-ever strategic discussion with UAE on January 20 and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi, will be our guest at the Republic Day," he said.

Photo left: from l. to r.: Minister M.J. Akbar, Maharashtra Assembly chief Whip Raj Purohit, MLA, Justice Gopala Gowda, GOPIO Intl Coordinator Issac John, GOPIO Life Member Manu Kumar and GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham



Photo above: GOPIO Officials and Conv. organizers with dignitaries at the Inauguration

The external affairs ministry will soon launch portals to help Indians who are travelling abroad in search of jobs, he said. On demonetization, Akbar said, "A single, historic move by the Prime Minister has converted black money into white and this will now be used for the nation's development."



Photo: Conference attendees

Highlighting the significant role that global Indians had played in strengthening international relations, Akbar said, "Once, we had the song, 'Mera jota hai Japani'. India no longer buys shoes from Japan. We are, in fact, in talks with Japan to build high-speed railway corridors. Nor is India buying Lal Topis (Red hats) from Russia. Instead, we are strengthening our defense, space and nuclear ties with Russia, besides becoming a major defense partner for America. This has materialized largely because of the global Indians in these countries," Akbar said. He also referred to the bilateral agreements signed with Gulf countries to ensure a better deal for Indian workers. In this connection, he lauded the initiatives taken by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj to solve problems faced by Indians abroad.



Photo above: Releasing the book "28 Incredible Years - Re-inventing the Indian Diaspora," from l. to r. Raj Purohit MLA, Rajeev Chandrasekhar MP, Sunny Kulathakal, Minister M.J. Akbar, Justice Gopala Gowda, Niraj Baxi, Issac John and Dr. Thomas Abraham

Thomas Abraham, chairman of the organization, raised the issue of provisions for NRIs to exchange old currency. "We are thankful that the deadline has been extended to June 30. However, notes can be exchanged only in certain branches of the Reserve Bank of India. For a few thousand rupees, people cannot travel to a different city." To ensure that the money does not go waste, he requested the government to make provisions for NRIs to exchange notes in other banks.

President of GOPIO Niraj Baxi told Akbar that the body had played a vital role in helping the government formulate the idea of PBD. "We have requested the government to allow our members to speak on this occasion, since we will be able to present the problems faced by the Diaspora in a more convincing manner," Baxi added. Akbar said that he had received a complaint in this regard, and would look into the same.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar MP, in his keynote address, said that non-residential Indians (NRIs) were a powerful asset to the country. "The process of institutionalizing the NRI and PIO communities is a long one. Many problems they are faced with today are very old. However, the principle of 'leaving no Indian behind', which the Centre has espoused is starting to yield results," Chandrasekhar added.

Justice Gopala Gowda too called for empowering the Indian Diaspora, which, he said, would, in turn bolster the country. Raj Purohit, MLA and Chief Whip of the BJP in Maharashtra, used the occasion to praise demonetization which he described as a fight against corruption. He wanted the expatriate Indian community to back the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his efforts to transform India through various programs like Make in India and Swachh Bharat.



Photos: Conference Sessions in Progress. Photo Left: Dr. Charan Singh speaking at the session, sitting from l. to r.: Serial entrepreneur Dr. Nanua Singh, CEO of RGBSI; GOPIO Intl Coordinator for South Asia Shaji Baby John and GOPIO Executive VP Noel Lal' Photo Right: Start-Up session moderated by Rajesh Johny in the left.

Describing himself as a soldier for the GOPIO, motivational speaker and author [Shiv Khera](#) stressed the relevance and importance of the three P skills - people skills, persuasive skills and prioritizing skills. Khera opined that the reservation policy in the country had outlived its utility and needed to change. "Reservation should not be based on caste, but education and economy. GOPIO should work with the government, and press for these changes," said Khera.



Photo left: Dr. Ruby Dhalla with convention attendees. Photo right, Shiv Kherra with convention attendees

On January, 6 there were different sessions devoted multiple topics of interest to the Diaspora. Sessions on women empowerment, social Indian with focus on rural India, underprivileged, GOPIO Chamber of Commerce, Start-up India and Startup pitchathon saw interesting presentations. The winner of the Pichathon was Siddhartha Goel from Bengaluru.



Photo left: Sysfore Co-founder Ajit George moderating Pichathon, Photo right: Pichathon Winner Siddhartha and Anjali Goel receiving Award, from l. to r. Dr. Thomas Abraham, Siddhartha and Anjali Goel, Niraj Baxi and Sunny Kulathakal

At the valedictory function, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented the GOPIO community service awards to six eminent NRIs who have excelled in their professions and/or contributed substantially to the cause of Indian community and society at large. They are Dr. Abraham M George (USA and India), Chandu Patel (USA), Naliandra (Jay) Naidu (Durban, South Africa), Dr. Ram Buxani (Dubai), Dr. George Cherian (Bahrain) and Vinod Patel (Fiji). A special recognition Pravasi Mitra Award was presented to Karnataka Police DGP Om Prakash for his service excellence in helping and recovering money of NRI's cheated by a real estate developer in Bengaluru.



Photo above: GOPIO officials and awardees with Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, From l.to to r.: Convention Convener Dr. J. Alexander, Karnataka NRI Forum Vice Chairperson Arti Krishna, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Exec. VP Noel Lal, Award Recipients Vinod Patel (Fiji) and Chandu Patel (USA), C.N. Siddaramaiah, Award Recipient Dr. Gerooge Cherian (Bahrain), GOPIO Intl Coordinator for the Middle East Issac John, Jay Naidu (South Africa), GOPIO's Pravasi Mitra Award Recipient DGP Om Prakash of Karnataka, GOPIO's Global Ambassador Sunny Kulathakal, GOPIO President Niraj Baxi GOPIO Intl Coordinator for South Asia Shaji Baby John



Photo left: GOPIO Convention - Karnataka DGP Om Prakash is presented Pravasi Mitra Award for his service to the NRI community settled in Bangalore

While appreciating GOPIO's role in promoting the interests of Pravasis, the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged Non-Resident Indians to build schools and hospitals in their native states. He also referred to the new NRI policy unveiled by Karnataka government that aims to help residents from the state working abroad. Arathi Krishna, Deputy Chairman, NRI Forum of Karnataka Government extended all support to GOPIO convention.

GOPIO Convention passed resolutions including one on Demonetization in which NRIs/PIOs are left with over Rs. 15,000 crores of old currencies in small amounts at an average of Rs. 5000 per person. GOPIO resolution calls upon the Government of India to provide the NRIs and PIOs an opportunity similar to the one given to Indian nationals; that is, allowing them to deposit up to Rs. 250,000.00 of Indian currency in either the Reserve Bank of India or the State Bank of India or any bank where the NRIs keep their NRO account.



Photo above: GOPIO Bangalore Convention Banquet - Part of the Audience

Both evenings, during the convention, had superb cultural programs students of Monisha Arts and other artists and put together by Monisha Arts director Sreedevi Unni. The meeting ended with an outing and a luncheon at a farm at the outskirts of Bengaluru.



Photo: Cultural program finale dance with all artists. Dance Director Sreedevi Unni is in the center.

The convention was hosted by GOPIO-Bengaluru Chapter and under the direction of GOPIO Global Ambassador Sunny Kulathakal with support from Convention Convener Dr. J. Alexander, GOPIO International Coordinator Shaji Baby John and GOPIO- Bengaluru Secretary George Varghese. Mr. Rajesh Johny served as the Chairman of Conference Program Committee.



Photo: Cultural program coordinator Sreedevi Unni (in the center), Director of Monisha Arts with some of the dancers.

Cultural Program at the GOPIO Convention in Bengaluru - YouTube Videos

Bharatha Natyam Dance - <https://youtu.be/doULOI90hY8>

Bharatha Natyam Dance (Cont'd) - <https://youtu.be/-91JbVheawA>

Mohiniyattam - https://youtu.be/eEsk_xwMWUA

Semiclassical Dance on Krishna Leela - <https://youtu.be/DSN11mVZFUl>

Odissi Dance - <https://youtu.be/FLm9ui7pJ68>

Kuchipudi Dance - <https://youtu.be/W0sGThf796Q>

Kathak Dance - https://youtu.be/W_qPCA-EgnU

Finale Dance - <https://youtu.be/FyDbVQQbGbM>

Contact: Sunny Kulathakal, GOPIO's Global Ambassador, Bahrain Tel: +973 39441956, India Tel: 09845756692

For more information, contact: **GOPIO Global Ambassador Sunny Kulathakal** in India at 09845756692, e-mail: kulathakal44@gmail.com or **Convention Convener Shaji Baby John** at 09567471111, E-mail: shajibabyjohn@kingsgroup.co.in.

GOPIO PASSES RESOLUTION ON ISSUES OF DEMONETIZATION AFFECTING NRIs AND PIOs

GOPIO PASSES RESOLUTION ON ISSUES OF DEMONETIZATION AFFECTING NRIs AND PIOs

GOPIO Convention in Bangalore passed the following resolution:

Demonetization of the higher end Indian currencies and issues affecting NRIs and PIOs

GOPIO supports demonetization of the higher end Indian currencies so as to curtail black money and terrorism funding.

GOPIO thanks the Government of India for accepting our request on behalf of the Indian Diaspora for an extension until June 30, 2017. However, the Reserve Bank of India is accepting any demonetized currencies from those who do not have an Indian passport and the Diaspora needs further simplification and further extension of the current proclamation

- Earlier a statement had been made to the effect that up to "Rs 250,000.00 could be deposited with a pan card (where the individuals can show evidence of withdrawal from a bank).
- As per the latest announcement by the RBI dated 30th December 2016, a customs declaration is required upon arrival at the airport along with copies of statements of all bank accounts in India evidencing that no old currency was deposited during November - December 2016. All this will be required for the small sum of Rs 25,000.00 only.
- GOPIO calls upon the Government of India to provide the NRIs and PIOs an opportunity similar to the one given to Indian nationals; that is, allowing them to deposit up to Rs. 250,000.00 of Indian currency in either the Reserve Bank of India (if convenient) or the State Bank of India (since it has more branches) or at Consulate General of India that is closest to their place of residence.

Moreover, because not all NRIs and PIOs may be able to visit India prior to June 30, 2017, NRIs and PIOs should be given six more months (i.e., until December 30, 2017) to exchange the old currency notes at either the Reserve Bank of India or a State Bank of India, which has more branches (as long as they provide documentary proof that they are NRIs/PIOs and they had not visited India between November 8, 2016 and December 30, 2016.

GOPIO EUROPEAN CONVENTION - A GRAND SUCCESS



GOPIO, Global Organization of People of Indian Origin is a community supported non-profit organization that takes up issues of the Indian Diaspora and attempts to unify the community in its common causes. GOPIO Europe chapter organized its Europe convention in Paris from 10th to 13th of November, 2016.

The Convention started on 10th Thursday evening with the opening registration followed by welcoming delegates, special dinner at the Indian restaurant in Champs Elysees, Paris and 'Discover LIDO' show thereafter.

Panel discussions on various issues around the world by experts, cultural programs, educational visits, get-togethers, award ceremony, book release, general body meeting etc. were arranged as part of the convention. GOPIO members from different countries including USA, Australia, South Africa, Mauritius, Austria and UK have actively participated in the Europe summit that lasted four days.

Official inauguration of the convention took place on 11th Friday evening at by Indian Ambassador Dr.Mohan Kumar. The ambassador urged all the GOPIO members to concentrate on charity activities in India. He said that GOPIO is a mature entity now and it is high time that we help our motherland in any possible way. Indian Parliament member Dr. Satyajeeth Singh, Maharashtra assembly Chief Whip Raj K Purohit, GOPIO Global Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Exce. VP Noel Lal, GOPIO International Coordinator for Europe Dr. Pradip Sewoke and Convention Convener Mehan Poinoosamy delivered speeches at the function.



Photo: GOPIO-Europe Convention Inauguration - Indian Ambassador Dr. Mohan Kumar speaking at the Inaugural function. Seated from l. to r. Convention Covener Mehan Poinoosamy, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Convention Chairman Dr. Pradip Sewoke, Dr. Sathyapal Singh MP, Raj Purohit MLA, GOPIO Exec. VP Noel Lal

A documentary film 'Mademoiselle France Pleure' about Soldiers who were martyred in World War I, directed by Mr. Vijay Singh, was shown at the program just after the convention inauguration.

With India at the threshold of accepting new technologies and business investment, the new team has come up with a motto, 'GOPIO Means Business'. This move would focus on attracting the entrepreneurs and businessmen among the Indian Diaspora to take more interest in investing in India in all spheres ranging from business, philanthropy, education, healthcare and social causes. Least to say, there was active participation of eminent writers and artists in this convention.

The European Biennial Summit is one of the pivotal events in the global GOPIO program calendar. The theme of this summit, 'Indiaspora, Opportunities beyond Frontiers', conveyed GOPIO's thrust to mobilize Diaspora's technology and professionals as well as the investment resources. Discussions on many important issues and topics of common interest were also carried out to gather more information in various fields.



Photo:GOPIO team at Neuve Chapelle paying tribute to the Indian soldiers who lost their lives in World War I.

As part of the program, a visit to the World War I memorial in Neuve Chapelle (North of France) had been arranged on Friday morning to pay tribute to the Indian soldiers who were martyred in France. Mayor of Neuve Chapelle Mr. Roland Lieven, Mayor of Veile Chapelle Mr. Jean-Michel Desse, Mayor of La Couture Mr. Raymond Gaquere, Mayor of Laventie Mr. Jean Phillippe Boonaert and Mayor of Lorgies Mme Anne-Marie Lefebvre had attended the program.



Photo: GOPIO international delegates members at Neuve Chapelle, France



Photo: French fire force team, and former military members along with the Mayor at GOPIO program at Neuve Chappelle

At the site of Neuve Chapelle (Richebourg), there now stands a memorial garden, circled by domed pavilions and towering columns. It now forms a permanent reminder of the sacrifice of the soldiers of Indian origin, our forefathers.

Welcoming the guests to Paris, Convention Chairman Dr. Pradip Sewoke told the GOPIO members that the aim of the convention is to unite the whole Indian Diaspora in Europe and urged them to work together for a brighter future and that we are in dire need to open more GOPIO chapters and add life members in Europe so as to have a 'Strong United European GOPIO'. He added that it was essential to strengthen our efforts in the area of youth development, science and technology, women empowerment, charity activities, medical facilities, literary activities, business opportunities, etc.



Photo top: Cultural program in the evening-Bollywood dance by French team, Photo bottom: Punjabi Bhangra dance



Photo: A Rajasthani Classical dance and Music by a group of artists

Conference sessions started on 12th Saturday morning at the Marriott Hotel, Paris. French minister for overseas affairs Mdm Ericka Bareights inaugurated the conference sessions. She praised GOPIO's activities for the welfare of the Indian people abroad.



Photo: GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abaham presenting a book titled Global Indian Diaspora - GOPIO Making an Impact to Minister Ericka Bareights at the GOPIO-Europe Conference Inauguration; From l. to r.: GOPIO Exec. VP Noel Lal, Deputy Chief of the Indian Mission in Paris Manish Prabhat, Chief Whip of Maharashtra Assembly Raj Purohit MLA, Dr. Sathyapal Singh MP, Minister Bareights, Convention Chairman Dr. Pradip Sewoke and Dr. Abraham

Conference topics discussed included Uniting the Indian youth Diaspora of the world; Francophone Indian Diaspora: past-present-future; Make in India: exploiting the potential, Entrepreneurial India; Indian Diaspora in the world of finance; Higher mortality rate among the Indian Diaspora; Women Leadership Science and technology council etc. were discussed in the conference sessions. The experts in the corresponding field enriched each session with their informative speeches.



Audience at the Conference session

GOPIO Europe summit passed two resolutions at the conclusion of the conference. The first one endorsed Government of India in implementing demonetization of Indian Currency notes. The resolution says that this attempt will help to reduce the black money and corruption in India, but asked the Govt. to take care of NRI/PIO concerns. Second resolution was to request the French and Indian governments to support GOPIO International's demand that the monument of Indian Soldiers at Neuve Chappell should be recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

On Saturday evening, the valedictory function started at Bateau Mouch on River Seine. Award ceremony and the launching of the book on Nelson Mandela written by Farook Khan and photographed by Kevin Joseph (Nelson Mandela's private photographer) were the attractions.



Photo: South African Embassy officials in Paris releasing the book on Nelson Mandela written by Farook Khan and photographed by Kevin Joseph (Nelson Mandela's private photographer) in the presence of GOPIO officials

GOPIO-Europe General Body Meeting took place on Sunday 13th morning at the Marriot Hotel which discussed future programs in Europe and was followed by a Paris sight-seeing leisure trip.

GOPIO Europe convention organizing committee thanked everyone who made this Europe summit a big success and ensured that the committee will arrange many other programs in future to promote global unity and charity.

Contact: Dr. Pradip Sewoke, GOPIO's International Coordinator for Europe at pradip-kumar.sewoke@orange.fr or Mr. Mehen Poinosawmy, President, GOPIO-Paris Nord at mpoinos@gmail.com or visit:

<http://gopiofrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Convention.html>

GOPIO ELECTS DR. THOMAS ABRAHAM, INDER SINGH AND SUNNY KULATHAKAL TO TOP POSITIONS

At the last GOPIO General Body Meeting, Dr. Thomas Abraham was brought back as the Chairman of GOPIO International after a lapse of seven years. Chairman is the head of the organization, as well as coordinates and chairs the General Body meeting. The Chairman also oversees the functioning Executive Council, GOPIO Councils and conducting elections every two years. Outgoing Chairman Inder Singh was elected as Executive Trustee of the GOPIO Foundation.

A new position GOPIO's Global Ambassador was created by the GOPIO General Body by a constitutional amendment. Outgoing Executive Vice President Sunny Kulathakal from Bahrain was elected as GOPIO's Global Ambassador. As GOPIO Ambassador, Mr. Kulathakal has been given the responsibility to initiate chapters in all those cities and countries where GOPIO is yet to make its presence with chapters and Life Members.

The GOPIO Chairman, Executive Trustee and GOPIO's Global Ambassador serve as ex-officio members of the Executive Council headed by President Niraj Baxi, who serves as CEO of the organization.



GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Foundation Executive Trustee Inder Singh and Global Ambassador Sunny Kulathakal

Brief profiles of Abraham, Singh and Kulathakal are provided below.

Dr. Thomas Abraham

Dr. Thomas Abraham can be given great credits to the Indian Diaspora movement in the last 4 decades. Dr. Abraham coined the word PIO (people of Indian origin) in 1989, when he served as the Convener of the First Convention of People of Indian Origin in New York. Dr. Abraham initiated, nurtured and built up several community institutions including the Federation of Indian Association (FIA) of New York Metro Area, the National Federation of Indian-American Associations (NFIA), GOPIO, National Indian American Association for Senior Citizens (NIAASC) and South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS). Was also co-founder of Indian American Kerala Center in New York and served Co-Chair for the campaign to raise funds for Jagdish Bhagwati Chair for Indian Political Economy at Columbia University. A material scientist and nanotechnologist by profession, Dr. Abraham is president of Innovative Research and Products, Inc.

Inder Singh

Inder Singh regularly writes and speaks on Indian Diaspora. He is the author of *The Gadar Heroics* - life sketches of over 50 Gadar heroes. He is Executive Trustee of GOPIO Foundation, was chairman of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin from 2009-16 and president from 2004-2009, chairman of National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA) from 1992-96 and president from 1988-92. He was founding president of Federation of Indian Associations in Southern California.

Sunny Kulathakal

Publicist, author, publisher and community worker Sunny Kulathakal is a Post-Graduate in Economics. After a stint in the editorial department of a leading newspaper, he served as the Director of Development Department of a college in Bangalore for eight years. From 1977 onwards in the Middle East, Kulathakal did a series of research studies on Indians in the Gulf which were published as cover stories in the Illustrated Weekly of India, a Times of India publication. From 2004 onwards, Kulathakal is in Bahrain publishing The Gulf Who's Who Directory. After receiving the community service award from GOPIO in 2004, he has been serving GOPIO in various capacities.

GOPIO has also expanded with appointments of International Coordinators in those regions where there were vacancies, national Coordinators and area coordinators as well as other position including GOPIO Council Chairs and Co-Chairs. These will be announced after all profiles are compiled.

Contact: GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Tel: 203-329-8010, gopio@optonline.net; Executive Trustee of GOPIO Foundation Inder Singh, 818-708-3885, indersinghusa@gmail.com and GOPIO's Global Ambassador Sunny Kulathakal, Bahrain +973-39441956, India +91-9845756692, kulathakal44@gmail.com.

GOPIO AND INDIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY HOST MINISTER NITIN GADKARI AT THE LA HARBOR BOAT RIDE AND INTERACTION

Indian American Community of Southern California hosted lunch at the La Espada Vessel "Harbor Breeze" Los Angeles Harbor for Nitin Gadkari, India's Minister of Transportation and Shipping and Ambassador Venkatesan Ashok, Consul General of India, San Francisco, on July 22, 2016. There were approximately 40 people on the boat including GOPIO Foundation Executive Trustee Inder Singh, GOPIO Treasurer Kewal Kanda, NFIA president Ashok Madan, GOPIO LA president Navin Gupta, several members of GOPIO - Rajinder Dhunna, Abdulgani Shaikh, Yash Singh, Sunny Chauhan, Ajmer Singh and many prominent members of the community, Harbhajan Samra, Sudip Gorakshakar, Satish Kanda, Nadadur Vardhan, Avadhesh and Uma Agrawal, to name a few. Some members of the local OFBJP, Roshan Khandpur, Malik Banda, Bala Palanisamy, Subbu Shanmugham, and Raj Walia, also attended the lunch.

The boat left the Harbor a little after 10:30 am for a tour of the Harbor. Prior to the boat tour, Mr. Gadkari met the representatives of the LA Harbor Port Authority and discussed matters relating to shipping and transportation. Mr. Gadkari also chatted with the local community business leaders who presented him some plans to do business with India. Besides sight-seeing at the LA Harbor, Mr. Gadkari and community leaders enjoyed the interaction with each other. Mr. Gadkari was thankful for arranging this short boat tour where he was able to meet the community leaders. Ashoka the Great Restaurant served the lunch on the boat.

After the lunch, Inder Singh, Kewal Kanda, and Ashok Madan presented Mr. Gadkari a book on Global Indian Diaspora, a book on Gadar Heroics, and compilation of articles, *Indians in America* by Inder Singh. From the Harbor, the minister went to Los Angeles airport for his flight back to India.



Photo: GOPIO officials with Minister Nitin Gadkari during LA Harbor boat ride

GOPIO 2016 BIENNIAL CONVENTION A GRAND SUCCESS

With the theme "**Strengthening Connections between India and Indian Diaspora through Business,**" GOPIO International, Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (www.gopio.net), held its 27th Anniversary Celebrations and GOPIO Biennial Convention 2016 in New York, USA at the Marriott LaGuardia Hotel with evening banquets held at World's Fair Marina on June 24th and 25th, 2016. Over 200 delegates from 20

countries participated. GOPIO's New York Area Coordinator Lal Motwani served as the Convener along with Dr. Asha Samant, Kenny Desai, Shelly Nichani, Nohar Singh and Jayant Baxi as Co-Conveners.

The convention started with a moment of silence for the victims of terror around the world. It was followed by rendering of the national anthems of the USA, India and Guyana.



Photo above: Moment of silence in memory of recent terror victims, GOPIO officials and dignitaries at the head table: From l. to r.: GOPIO VP Ram Gadhavi, Convention Convener Lal Motwani, Guyana Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo, Indian's Consul General in New York Riva Ganguly Das, GOPIO President Niraj Baxi, GOPIO Exec. VP Noel Lal and GOPIO International Coordinator for North America Rajeev Mehta

The convention was inaugurated at the World's Fair Marina on June 24th evening by welcome remarks by Convention Convener Lal Motwani and by GOPIO President Niraj Baxi and at a welcome dinner. GOPIO Founder President Dr. Thomas Abraham conducted the evening program and served as the MC.



Photo above - Convention Inauguration by Lighting of the Lamp. From l. to r. : Dr. Asha Samant, Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Lord Diljit Rana, Lal Motwani, Amb. Riva Ganguly Das, Ram Gadhavi, Guyana Prime Minister Riva Ganguly Das, Noel Lal, Niraj Baxi and Sunny Kulathakal

The chief Guest was Guyana Prime Minister and First Vice President Moses Verasammy Nagamootoo, a freedom fighter for Guyana. PM Nagamootoo invited the Indian Diaspora community to consider Guyana as a destination for investment and business and spoke on many incentives Guyana could offer.

"So, we fully understand and identify with GOPIO's theme and your mission to mobilize the resources of Indians everywhere to promote trade with and strengthen the economy of India. We too would like to tap into the resources of the estimated four million Indian American community, which is distinguished for their business acumen, and technological capabilities," Said PM Nagamootoo.

Full text of PM Nagamootoo's speech is available at at this link, [Inaugural Address by Guyana Prime Minister and First Vice President Moses Verasammy Nagamootoo](#).

India's Consul General in New York Ambassador Riva Das Ganguly Das representing Govt. of India, delivered the inaugural address in which she noted the role played by GOPIO in launching and building a worldwide movement as a united force for the Indian Diaspora. The evening program ended with classical and semi-classical dances performed by students of Pandit Satya Narayana Charka.

Earlier on the day, a strategy planning workshop was held for GOPIO Executive Council Members and GOPIO Council Chairs. The Facilitator was Mr. Tarun Kapoor, Kapoor and Kapoor Hospitality Consultants, Inc., San Marino, CA. The 4-hour long workshop discussed the strategy for GOPIO to move forward in the next level of activities including the proposed GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce. This was followed Country and Regional reports.



Photo above: GOPIO Officers with Strategy Planning Workshop Leader Tarun Kapoor

The evening program ended with entertainment of Kathak dances by students of Pandit Satya Narayan Charka and a DJ with GOPIO delegates dancing to the Bollywood tune.



Photo above: Pandit Satya Narayan Charka and his students at the GOPIO 2016 inaugural dinner

On Saturday June 25, a full day GOPIO conference was held at the New York LaGuardia Marriott Hotel from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. There were 9 sessions to deliberate on the Global Indian Diaspora; evaluate GOPIO's progress in 27 years; network, exchange ideas, and connect with PIO/NRI delegates from around the world. The conference, organized by Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman, Conference Committee and Founder President, GOPIO International, consisted of an inaugural plenary session with keynote speaker Raj Jaswa, former President of TiE Silicon Valley and director and trustee of TiE International, Serial technology entrepreneur, and

an Adjunct Professor at several Universities in India. This was followed by two track conference sessions, (1) Business and Technology ventures and opportunities and (2) Social, Political, Gender and Health challenges.

Make in India - Diaspora role

- Major Issues of Indian Diaspora
- Indian Diaspora Promoting Medical and Pharmaceutical Industries
- Diaspora Indian Women Forum - Empowering Diaspora Indian Women
- Diaspora in Hospitality and Convenience Foods
- Diaspora Writers Forum
- Promoting Diaspora Entrepreneurship, Technology and Business
- Health and Wellness of the Indian Diaspora

The conference ended with concluding presentations from each session from the Session Chairs, namely, Prakash Shah, Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Nitin Shah, Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta, Viresh Sharma, Sudha Parekh, Dr. Asha Samant, Jagdish Lodhia and Ram Gadhavi. Several resolutions were presented by a committee headed by Dr. Rajeev Mehta. Resolutions for the conference session were added to these, and will be sent to Govt. of Indian and other government agencies.



Photo above: GOPIO conference concluding session with session chairs and GOPIO officers; Front row from l. to r. Nitin Shah, Prakash Shah, Dr. Thomas Abrfaham, Niraj Baxi, Sudha Parekh, Dr. Asha Samant, Jagdish Lodhia, Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta, Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Ram Gadhavi and Kewal Kanda. Bank Row: Ishawar Ramlutchman, Noel Lal and Dr. Pradip Sewoke

The 27th Anniversary celebrations concluded with a Grand Finale Banquet and Recognition of Businesses and Entrepreneurs with Social Responsibility at the World's Fair Marina. The honorees were Lord Diljit Rana of Belfast (Northern Ireland, UK), Raj Jaswa of Silicon Valley and TV Asia Chairman H.R. Shah.



Photo above: GOPIO International Awardees - Entrepreneurs and businessmen with social responsibility are being recognized by GOPIO officials, person in the middle in each photo are the awardees in the tree photos, from l. to r.: Lord Diljit Rana, Raj Jaswa and H.R. Shah

Dr. Sudhir Parikh, Chairman of Parikh Worldwide Media and Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja were honored with Media Awards for their contribution and support of the community.

The Chief Guest was Sir Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards, KNH, OBE, known as Viv Richards, a former West Indian cricketer, regarded as one of the greatest batsmen of all time. He was joined in the evening by Antigua & Barmuda Minister Trade, Industry, Commerce, Sports and National Festivals Mr. E.P. Chet Greene.



Photo above: Cricketer Vivian Richards at the Finale GOPIO Banquet, from l. to r.: GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Bharat Goradia, TV Asia Chairman and GOPIO Advisor H.R. Shah, Convention Convener Lal Motwani, Cricketer Sir Vivian Alexander Richards, Antigua & Barmuda Minister E.P. Chet Greene, GOPIO President Niraj Baxi and GOPIO Exec. VP Noel Lal

The banquet ended with a Bollywood performances put together by Dharmatma Saran of India Festival Committee and Anita Bhat of Miss India-CT.



Photo above: Artists with organizers at the Finale Banquet; at the extreme left is Dr. Thomas Abraham, in the middle is H.R.Shah, and to the left is Dharmatma Saran, Lal Motwani and Anita Bhat

GOPIO held its Biennial General Body which elected Dr. Thomas Abraham as Chairman, Lord Diljit Rana as Chief of Board of Advisors and Mr. Inder Singh as Executive Trustee of GOPIO Foundation. In the constitutional amendments, the General Body also made a resolution to change GOPIO Business Council as GOPIO Internal Chamber of Commerce and created a new position GOPIO's Global Ambassador. The General Body selected and endorsed former GOPIO Exec. Vice President Sunny Kulathakal from Bahrain to that position. More details will be presented in the next issue of GOPIO News.

With gratitude, GOPIO acknowledged support of Platinum sponsors Embassy National Bank, State Bank of India, Labidco Port Services Ltd; Gold sponsors Dr. Asha Samant and Kenny Desai; and Silver sponsors Bank of Baroda, Adani North America, S.S. White Technologies Inc. and Dr. Praveen Chopra.

A souvenir program booklet of the convention is available by sending a check \$10 to GOPIO, Inc., Attn. Mr. Lal Motwani, 237-50 Fairbury Avenue, Bellerose, NY 11426, Tel: 516-581-3332, E-mail: lmotwani@verizon.net.

GOPIO BIENNIAL CONVENTION PASSES TEN RESOLUTIONS

[Resolutions passed at the GOPIO Convention in New York \(USA\) on June 25, 2016](#)

1. Voting rights for Indian citizens living outside India

The 9 million strong Non Resident Indians (NRIs) i.e. Indian citizens living outside India, have been building India's image and enthusiastically contributing to the economic development, should be allowed to exercise their right of franchise as enshrined in the Constitution of India.

The Election Commission of India should finalize the procedure for electronic voting before the next general election in India takes place.

2. Rajya Sabha seats for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)

NRIs are an important factor in promoting India's interest, in shaping relations between the "home" and the "host" countries and in helping steer a dynamic shift in India's economic and political advantage in world affairs. However, 10 million NRIs who are citizens of India, have no representation in the decision making process of the country of their citizenship.

We urge the Government of India to nominate a few prominent NRIs as members of the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of Parliament) so as to reinforce and further integrate the bonds between India and the overseas Indian community.

3. Pro-active Role for Indian Missions to Reach Out and Help Indian Citizens Needing Emergency Assistance

Indian Missions abroad must actively help Indians who need consular services in emergency situations.

4. Engaging NRIs/PIOs for Educational, Health and Social Causes

Many NRIs want to support their alma maters; set up schools and colleges in their villages and towns, and support social and environmental causes. However, they face major hurdles.

The clearance process through the Home Ministry is very time consuming and needs to be streamlined and made more efficient.

5. Protection of Real Estate and Business Investments as well as Inherited assets

PIOs & NRIs have substantial investments in the residential and commercial real estate in India and the investment is rapidly on the increase. However, the practices and the laws in India do not provide enough relief to the investors when the tenants and businesses refuse to honor their agreements to pay the rents or vacate the premises, honor contracts, etc. The PIO/NRIs find themselves helpless in protecting their investments and inheritance. Moreover, when the NRIs/PIOs make a trip to India to attend hearings, most of the times they find that hearings are postponed by either the court or the litigant based in India.

We want the Govt. to enact legislation to designate Fast Track Courts for NRIs/PIOs for the speedy settlement of their property, business, inheritance and other legal issues in India.

We also call upon the Government of India to enact another legislation to provide Title Insurance to ensure that their ownership in real estate is protected against forged signatures on the deed and for any such fraudulent transfer of their properties.

6. Discriminative Admission Fee Rates for PIOs and OCI Card Holders

The discriminatory higher fee for foreigners at monuments, hotels & all such places includes Indians who are now citizens of other countries. These are the same people who have been sending over 70 Billion dollars to India, act as the soft power for India abroad and also serve as a huge economic strength. About five years ago, the Prime Minister of India, through a press release, made entrance fee to monuments and the archeological sites such as Taj Mahal, uniform for all - citizens of India, NRIs/PIOs and the foreign visitors. However, it is yet to be implemented.

GOPIO urges the government to implement uniform entrance fee throughout India including monuments under the jurisdiction of the states.

7. Taxing of NRIs/PIOs Social Security Benefits in India

Many NRIs/PIOs are moving back to India to be closer to their families. Once they settle back in India, their social security benefits (which are generally tax free in the developed countries (income comes below the tax bracket) are taxed according to the Indian tax rules.

We strongly feel that those who are getting their social security benefits from outside India should receive tax parity similar to Indian retirees and request the Finance Ministry to change the rules. Of course, such person's Indian income must be taxed as per the rules.

8. Expand Know India Program

The Know India program has been very successful but is limited to only about 100 students.

It must be expanded to bring a couple of thousands of young people every year. If the need arises, community groups in developed countries be asked to sponsor youngsters for this program so that govt. alone does not spend on its expenses.

9. Set Up for Involvement with Ministries of Commerce, Science and Technology, Power, Rural Development, Tourism

These ministries should have separate NRI/PIO Advisory Committee which should meet on a regular basis to seek ways to involve NRIs/PIOs in developmental activities related to the individual ministries.

NB. Such advisory committee existed informally in a couple of ministries before.

10. Set up NRI Ministry or NRI Coordination Office with All State Governments

Some states take advantage of the home-coming of the Pravasis and organize their own PBD like programs to attract them to their states (since the Pravasis can easily relate to people and places in their home states). States such as Kerala, Gujarat, and UP have already set up direct communication channels with NRIs from their states.

Other states are requested to establish direct contacts with NRIs from their respective States.

GOPIO BIENNIAL CONVENTION 2016 - CONFERENCE REPORTS

GOPIO BIENNIAL CONVENTION 2016

Theme: "Strengthening Connections between India and Indian Diaspora Through Business"

GOPIO Conference Reports

Summary of Conference Sessions held on Saturday, June 25, 2016

Conference Inaugural Session - 9 a.m.

Participants: Dr. Thomas Abraham (Moderator), Lal Motwani, Niraj Baxi, Dr. J. Alexander (Speaker), Raj Jaswa (Keynote Speaker), Anita Bhat (Resource Person)



Photo above: Conference Inaugural Session, Keynote speaker Raj Jaswa Speaking. From l. to r. Raj Jaswa, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Niraj Baxi, Dr. J. Alexander, Lal Motwani and Anita Bhat

Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman, Conference Committee; Founder President, GOPIO Intl., Stamford, CT, USA gave a brief welcome and introduced convention convener Lal Motwani and speakers, Dr. J. Alexander and Raj Jaswa. He spoke of a change in GOPIO objectives after human rights violation in Fiji in 1989. He shared the new initiatives designed to facilitate investments and shared the exciting news of starting a GOPIO Chamber of Commerce.

Lal Motwani, GOPIO's New York Area Coordinator and Convention Convener, Bellerose, NY, USA gave a few brief welcoming remarks and thanked all the supporters.

Niraj Baxi, President of GOPIO Intl., San Jose, CA, USA, greeted members and attendees as well as his team, and promised to take GOPIO to greater heights with new initiatives.

Dr. J. Alexander, IAS, Former Chief Secretary and former Minister Karnataka, GOPIO-Bangalore, India opened the floor by leading the members in an inspirational chanting of OM for peace. He remarked that GOPIO is straying from its main goal of bringing justice and peace. While GOPIO 's business initiatives are helpful he stressed that working towards peace needs to be the main focus. Dr. Abraham countered by saying that while GOPIO's main mission will never change, business initiatives are crucial to attracting the next generation. Without that next generation GOPIO will not be able to meet its goals.

Keynote Speaker: **Raj Jaswa**, former President of TiE Silicon Valley and director and trustee of TiE International, Serial technology entrepreneur, and currently an Adjunct Professor at several Universities, Co-Founder Selectica and Opti and former CEO and Chairman of Dyyno, Silicon Valley, CA, USA.

He said that like most immigrants, Indians leave home with very little money in their pockets, but arrive with an abundance of optimism, hope and a willingness to work hard and sacrifice for the next generation. And wherever Indians have migrated they have prospered. Roots were put down 200 years ago in distant British colonies, like Guyana, Fiji and Africa, and have flourished. In the last 50 years, waves of tech immigrants have streamed from India to the US, Europe and Australia. The success of this wave has been like a tsunami and has fundamentally changed the global economy. It has moved from an industrial economy to an information and knowledge economy. And Indian immigrants are thriving joining as team members and eventually become managers, leaders and teachers of this information and knowledge economy.

A call was made for action; to become mentors and teachers. GOPIO has the power to create tsunamis that will transform economies worldwide.

Reported by: Anita Bhat, Chair, GOPIO Youth Council and Trustee Chair, GOPIO-CT

Session I - Make in India, 10 a.m.

Participants: **Prakash Shah** (Moderator), **Rahul Shukla** (Lead Speaker), **Vilay Wadhwa** (Speaker), **Ms. Mini Guleria** (Speaker), **Harbachan Singh** (Resource Person)



Photo above: Lead speaker Rahul Shukla delivering his keynote address, from l. to.r. Rahul Shukla, Prakash Shah, Vilay Wadhwa, Mini Guleria and Harbachan Singh

After a brief welcome and introduction by Dr. Thomas Abraham, **Prakash Shah** opened the session by emphasizing the timeliness and importance of the topic, Make in India. The Make in India program included new initiatives designed to facilitate investment, foster innovation, protect intellectual property, and build best-in-class manufacturing infrastructure. He said that the Indian government has taken major steps to foster the implementation of this initiative immediately.

Rahul Shukla shared his experience at S.S. White Technologies Inc. NJ. During his time there he turned around a failing company by instilling pride and inclusiveness in the employee force while also rewarding stellar performance. The ensuing confidence and trust of the employees catapulted the company to measurable success within a short period of time. He viewed every obstacle as a challenge and is a firm believer in complying with all government regulations.

Vilay Wadhwa's company, Adani North America, CT, deals with chemicals & aerospace. He stressed that his company can offer assistance by providing subsidies, helping with approvals at state and national levels, providing skilled labor force, finding suitable site locations and local partners, especially land owners. With its two trillion-dollar economy, it is said that by 2020, India would be the youngest new market in the world and last year it beat China and took the first place.

Ms. Mini Guleria is a business consultant from California. She traced her success story to building business bridges between USA, India, and Dubai. Some projects in which she has been involved include hospitality, tourism, and beauty and health products.

All three speakers stressed the importance of using Indian-based professionals, such as lawyers and accountants, particularly those who qualified in India, to help build businesses in the USA.

Reported by: Harbachan Singh, GOPIO Life Member, New York, NY, USA

Session II: Major Issues of Indian Diaspora, 10 a.m.

Participants: **Dr. Rajeev Mehta** (Moderator), **Sudha Acharya** (Speaker), **Noel Lal** (Speaker), **Issac John** (Speaker), **Sivan Madathil** (Speaker), **Dr. Léna Armoudom** (Speaker), **Ms. Mini Guleria** (Speaker), **Ram Gadhavi** (Resource Person)



Photo above: GOPIO Conference Session on Major Issues of the Indian Diaspora, from l. to. r.: Noel Lal, Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Sudha Acharya, Dr. Léna Armoudom, Sivan Madathil and Issac John

Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Chair of the Resolution Committee and GOPIO International Coordinator for North America (Piscataway, NJ, USA), the Moderator for this session, welcomed and introduced the speakers to the audience.

Sudha Acharya, Executive Director, South Asian Council for Social Services (Jamaica Estate, NY, USA) presented the "Major Issue Facing New Immigrant Groups in Western Society - North American Scenario."

Noel Lal, Managing Director, South Pacific Engineering and Exec. VP, GOPIO International (Sydney, Australia) spoke about the "Need for Disaster Assistance for NRIs/PIOs."

Issac John, Associate Editor, Khaleej Times and GOPIO International Coordinator for Middle East (Dubai, UAE) elaborated on the "Issues of the Indian Community in the Middle East." He stressed on the importance of NRIs in the Middle East, their insecurity, and how they send large sums of money India.

Sivan Madathil, Advocate, Kerala High Court & GOPIO Kochi, (Kochi, India), spoke about the "Human Rights violations of NRIs/PIOs."

Dr. Léna Armoudom, Orthodontist and GOPIO-Reunion (Reunion Islands) talked about the "Aspirations of French Speaking PIOs and Reunion Islanders" and wanted to know if the Global Indian diaspora had any suggestions regarding how the French Speaking PIOs could overcome the language barrier that was restricting their progress.

Ram Gadhavi, Vice President, GOPIO International (Wayne, NJ, USA), suggested that GOPIO should form a Diaspora writers' forum and talked about the importance of networking. He requested that the Government of India should not allow the airlines to hike up airfares and opined that GOPIO must take several steps to appraise governments of different countries of NRI/PIO issues.

Reported by Dr. Rajeev Mehta MD and Ram Gadhavi, New Jersey, USA

Session III - Indian Diaspora Promoting Medical and Pharmaceutical Industries, 11:30 a.m.

Participants: Biru Sharma (Moderator), Dr. Sudhir Parikh (Speaker), Dr. Prabhu Kulkarni (Speaker), Shailesh Naik (Resource Person)



Photo above: GOPIO Conference Session on Medical and Pharmaceutical Industries, from l. to t. Biru Sharma, Dr. Sudhir Parikh, Dr. Prabhu Kulkarni and Shailesh Naik

Biru Sharma opened the session by pinpointing the influence of Indian Diaspora in the fields of medicine and pharmaceuticals. He mentioned that Indian Diaspora has earned a name for itself in the West, particularly in medical, pharmaceutical and related healthcare fields. The percentage of doctors of Indian origin far exceeds the proportionate percentage of Indians in the United States of America. Even though their renown in the field itself is recommendable, many of the doctors such as the Dr. Parikh are diversifying themselves in the field of politics. In doing so those diversifying are promoting the influence of Indian Diaspora in the country.

Dr. Sudhir Parkih noted that in the 1960's and 1970's, the focus of newly immigrated doctors from the Indian subcontinent was on their fields of specialization. Since the 1990's, diversification became the name of the game with the Diaspora becoming more business savvy by making forays into politics, etc. Many doctors of Indian origin, such as Dr. Siddarth Mukherji and Dr. Atul Gawande, have become well known authors of medical literature. Dr. Parikh, an internationally acclaimed allergist wears many hats as a publisher, India advocate, and philanthropist. He has started one of the largest allergy companies in North America, in Hoboken, New Jersey. Recipient of Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, bestowed Padma Shri by the Indian government, Dr. Parikh stressed the importance of Diaspora having a voice on the political stage, and acknowledged the accomplishments of the likes of Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, Governor Nickey Haley of South Carolina and Upendra Chivukula of New Jersey.

Dr. Prabhu Kulkarni, founding president of GOPIO Ireland, received his Doctorate in Philosophy from Trinity University in Dublin, and has worked in various chemical industries. He currently spends a sizeable time in R&D and regulatory affairs. Dr. Prabhu highlighted India's role in medical tourism and the importance of telemarketing in today's world. Dr. Kulkarni emphasized that India can become a prominent player and an attractive destination for patients from many western countries such as the UK where the patients' waiting lists to receive medical services from the National Healthcare Services are long.

Shailesh Naik, P.E., LEED AP, Immediate Past President of GOPIO Connecticut Chapter and President, Charles A. Manganaro Consulting Engineers, PC, Hawthorne, NY related his experiences corresponding to his journey into entrepreneurship.

Reported by Shailesh Naik, Hawthorne, NY, USA

Session IV - Empowering Diaspora Indian Women, 11:30 a.m.

Participants: **Sudha Parekh** (Moderator), **Mini Guleria** (Speaker), **Annetta Seecharran** (Speaker), **Dr. Rohini Ramanathan** (speaker), **Ena Maraj** (Speaker), **Molly Benerjei** (Speaker), **Dr. Rini Johar** (Speaker), **Manju Madan** (Resource Person)



Photo above: GOPIO Conference Session on Diaspora Women's Forum, from l. to r.: Annetta Seecharan, Sudha Parekh, Manju Madan, Mini Guleria, Molly Banerjei, Dr. Rohini Ramanathan, Dr. Rini Johar and Ena Maraj

Sudha Parekh opened the session by emphasizing the importance of timeliness of the topic of Empowering Diaspora Indian Women.

Mini Guleria cited examples of the strength of women: Mahatma Gandhi said that the women are stronger than men, and Prime Minister Modi also said that the women are 10 times stronger than men. She spoke of the inequality between men and women citing the Masonic Lodge where they only have male members. She reminded the group that in Pakistan men can legally beat women if they don't perform according to their wishes. She encouraged the group by saying, "India needs us, let us be a force."

Annetta Seecharran stressed the importance of financially stable women. In the absence of financial stability, women face many challenges. She talked about SATHI, an organization that has identified violence against women and children since 1992. Another organization, CHHAYA works with New Yorkers of South Asian origin in low-income communities to build economically stability and sustainability. She spoke of SAKHI, an organization helping South Asian women against domestic violence.

Dr. Rohini Ramanathan spoke about Michael Korda's bestselling book "Power: How to Get It How to Use It?" She explained that power is a feeling. Power is control and women have unlimited power. Also talked about acquiring more power than you need could come with a price citing the example of Gautam Buddha who walked away from power as he didn't want to make sacrifices the power demanded.

Ena Maraj talked about building self-esteem and confidence. She encouraged the group to work toward it: "Be the best in whatever you do. Love yourself. Take action. Show your character, pay special attention to yourself. Challenge negative thoughts. Be a decision maker. She also shared that one day she'd like to see a female GOPIO president.

Molly Benerjei was born in Amritsar and now lives in Toronto, Canada where she has a program called "Chai with Molly." She challenged women to encourage and strengthen one another. She stressed that gender equality is more about including women and not excluding men.

Dr. Rini Johar likened the strength of a woman to a teabag: when put in hot water it shows its true strength. She talked about Urvashi Rautela and her successful career. Dr. Johar also talked about justice and equality for women. She wants to know what GOPIO can do for women?

Reported by Manju Madan, GOPIO Los Angeles, USA

Session V - Diaspora in Hospitality and Convenience Foods - 2 p.m to 3.15 p.m.

Participants: **Nitin Shah** (Moderator), **Lord Diljit Rana** (Lead Speaker), **Sunil Nayak** (Speaker), **Ved Sarvotham** (Speaker), **Shelly Nichani** (Speaker), **Balagopal Veliyath** (Resource Person)



Photo above: GOPIO Conference Session Hospitality and Convenience Foods, Lord Diljit Rana speaking, others from l. to r.: Nitin Shah, Sunil Nayak, Ved Sarvotham, Shelly Nichani and Balagopal Veliath

In his introductory remarks **Nitin Shah** mentioned the hospitality industry in the US and the AAHOA (Asian American Hotel Owners Association) with its wide network of over 15,000 members and 25,000 hotels.

Lord Diljit Rana, the key note speaker for this session, stated that in the Indian culture food was never a business. With western influence, it has become commercialized. He stated that hotel business comes naturally to us because of our caring nature. He quoted a Sanskrit verse "Athithi Devo Bhava" to show that in Indian culture a guest is to be treated as a God. On the topic of convenience foods, Mr. Rana categorized them as food prepared for hotels/restaurants and for display in shelves. With the crusade against obesity, the community has an opportunity for creating publicizing food which is healthy. Summing up, he mentioned that in the hospitality industry staff needs to be trained to look after guests with a caring nature.

Sunil Nayak began his address by stressing that hospitality is not a business, but a service. The hospitality business today is not what it used to be. Research should be done before embarking on buying hotel property and the success that some people achieve can be misleading. Marketing techniques have changed. At one time 90% of customers were walk-ins. Today a strong presence on social media and a good sales team are necessary. He mentioned the new challenges being faced by the industry with the new concepts like B&Bs and home-away.

Ved Sarvotham has been connected to the Diaspora through Western Union. The marketing techniques and sales strategies have changed and have become more Diaspora-oriented. Western Union has realized that India is positively engaged in foreign exchange with the US, Middle East or any other foreign country.

In 2000, **Shelly Nichani** moved from New Delhi, India to the US. Having owned hotels in India, he was no stranger to the hospitality business. Hospitality is tough business and to become involved research and education are required. People who came into the industry without studying the business experienced difficult time during the recession in 2008.

Reported by Balagopal Veliyath, GOPIO Life Member, Kochi Chapter, India

Session VI -Diaspora Writers Forum - 2 p.m to 3.15 p.m.

Participants: Moderator:**Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta**, Speakers:**Hindi - Anoop Bhargava, English - Lakshman Bulushi, Gujarati - Dr. R.P. Shah, Marathi - Dr. Kunda S. Joshi, Malayalam - Raju Thomas, Bengali -Suparna Guha**, Resource Person and Concluding Remarks - **Ram Gadhavi**



Photo above: GOPIO Conference session on Diaspora Writers Forum, from l. to r.: Raju thomas, Lakshman Bulusu, Dr. Kunda Joshi, Ram Gadhavi, Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta, R. P. Shah and Anoop Bhargava

Diaspora writers' forum was organized professionally for the first time in any of GOPIO's annual convention as a dedicated technical session. The Session VI was moderated by **Dr. Neerja A Gupta**. The exhaustive networking and comprehensive coordination was done for the session by Mr. Ram Gadhavi, the Vice-President of GOPIO. The writers' forum was presented as a '*salad-bowl*' to the GOPIO members in a sense that it had the length and breadth of all most all major representative languages used by Indian Diaspora. Hindi writings were represented by NJ, USA based **Anoop Bhargava**, Recipient of Vishwa Hindi Samman Award-2015 at 10th World Hindi Convention, Bhopal, India. A very well-known English poet **Lakshman Bulushi**, recited his poetry in the session who owes over 1000 Poems and Haiku and has published 4 collections of poetry books. Marathi Poet **Dr. Kunda S. Joshi**, a recipient of PA, USA, Pediatrician and Poet, brought nostalgia and female sensitivity into the audience. **Ms. Suparna Guha**, Writer and Expert in Rabindra Sangeet and Literature mixed poetry with sangeet to bring out the beauty of Bengali poetry. Mr. **Raju Thomas**, Poet and Writer, was eloquent in his Malayalam poetry and **Dr. R. P. Shah** brought in a difference by presenting the essays from his Gujarati plays. An atmosphere of amalgamation of Indian languages was seen on the platform, each reuniting themselves with their homeland through their recitation.

Overall the session gave free air to emotional exposition and concluding remarks by the resource person of the session Shri Ram Gadhavi brought timely and important proposal of forming a council for Indian Diaspora writers. This was accepted unanimously in the session. For more than an hour the participants of the session deliberated upon the role of the writers of Indian Diaspora and their synergic emotional connect with India.

Reported by Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta, Professor, Gujarat University; Chair, GOPIO Academic Council and Founding President, GOPIO-Ahmedabad Chapter, India,

Session VII Promoting Diaspora Entrepreneurship, Technology and Business - 3.30 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.

Participants: **Jagdish Lodhia** (Moderator), **Harsh Bhargava** (Lead Speaker), **Shaji Baby John** (Speaker), **Tirlok Malik**(Speaker), **Samir Patel** (Speaker), **Prince Ishwar Ramlutchman Mabheka Zulu** (Speaker), **Dr. Rohini Ramanathan** (Resource Person)



Photo above: GOPIO Conference Session on Diaspora Entrepreneurship, Technology and Business, from l. to r. Ishwar Ramlutchman, Jagdish Lodhia, Shaji Baby John, Tirlok Malik. Samir Patel, Dr. Rohini Ramanathan and Harsh Bhargava

The session started with brief remarks by GOPIO Associate Secretary **Jagdish Lodhia**, President of Lord Jewelers, Sydney, Australia.

The keynote speaker **Mr. Harsh Bhargava**, Founder and President, I Create, Inc., a New Jersey, USA-based nonprofit addressed the topic "Why Entrepreneurship Is No Longer an Option!" Through ICreate, Bhargava is currently involved in promoting entrepreneurship in several universities and institutions through out India.

Mr. Shaji Baby John, CEO, Kings Group spoke about "Promoting Smart Cities for NRI's and PIO's." His slide show defined the self-contained "Smart City" that his venture has created in Kerala. Based on the concept of: Stay, Play, Learn, Entertain, Invest, Innovate --all within a planned single living space, his city offers a complete eco-system, integrating elegant living with everything one needs for commerce, health, education and recreation while promoting self-contained green development, incorporating best practices for eco-friendly, sustainable, holistic living. Additionally, the "Smart City" will be a gateway to channel global expertise, knowledge and talents into India and provide support to international companies to access Indian markets.

Mr. Tirlok Malik, the CEO of Apple Productions, Inc. and NRI TV Film Club founder highlighted NRIs' nostalgia for and emotional ties to India and the Indian way of life, conflicts that result from living in two worlds, relationships sacrificed and the price of success in a "foreign" land.

Mr. Samir Patel, President, GOPIO-Gujarat, India and the managing director of the India-based Amos Enterprises spoke on "Indian Business Opportunities for NRI's/PIO's." His presentation outlined services that GOPIO-Gujarat, working closely with Indian Government agencies can render to the to NRI's and PIO's who wish to do business with and in India. It also offers assistance to those seeking medical/legal help.

Finally, GOPIO International Coordinator for Africa, **Prince Ishwar Ramlutchman Mabheka Zulu**, managing director of Vukani Muzhulu Services (PTY), Ltd. discussed "Promoting Business Opportunities in PIO Countries" with focus on South Africa. He highlighted hospitality, agriculture and water management as some of the industries that would flourish in South Africa. He insisted that GOPIO's role in making such investments to occur will be critical.

Reported by Dr. Rohini B. Ramanathan, President, The 7D's Consulting/Images International, New York, NY, USA

Session VIII Health and Wellness of the Indian Diaspora - 3.30 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.

Participants: **Dr. Asha Samant DMD** (Moderator), **Dr. Dattatreyyudu Nori, MD** (Lead Speaker), **Dr. Pallavi Solanki, MD** (Speaker), **Dr Pradip Sewoke MD**, (Speaker), **Dr. Maya Raghuwanshi** (Speaker)



Photo above: GOPIO Conf. Session Panel Diaspora Health and Wellness, from l. to r.: Sudha Acharya, Dr Maya Raghuwanshi, Dr. Dattatreyyudu Nori, Dr Pradip Sewoke, Dr Pallavi Solanki and Dr Asha Samant

GOPIO's Health and Wellness Council chair **Dr. Asha Samant** started the session with brief remarks on GOPIO's mission on health and wellness of persons of Indian origin. The "GOPIO Health and Wellness Council" has been established to address this continuously evolving issue. It is impacted by multitude of factors like environment, nutrition, individual behavior, disease education and awareness, access to health care, healthcare utilization, and participation in preventive health care programs etc. Thus Health and Wellness becomes a dynamic process.

To facilitate and achieve its objective the GOPIO Health and Wellness Council organized (a) discussion on health trends of the community from the scientific publications and government publications at seminars and guest speaker lectures. (b) When possible attempts to establish partnership with health care providers who are engaged in community services.

This year, keeping the same issues of Indian Diaspora health, Four Panel speakers on the Indian Diaspora Health Issue on Diabetes and Obesity -A slow Killer in community, Heart failure -A silent killer. Cancer -A violent killer, presented their experiences the prevalence in Indian Diaspora The panelists shared and update the occurrence of these killers' diseases in the community worldwide.

Speaking on Cancer and Indian Diaspora, **Dr. Dattatreyyudu Nori**, M.D., FACR, FACRO, Recipient of Padma Shri said that every year there are an estimated 10 million new cases, 6 million deaths and 22 million people living with cancer worldwide. Very little is known about cancer in immigrant populations. Currently, cancer registries around the world do not include information on Asian Indians in their registries. To understand the cancer burden in Indian diaspora, it is critical that these registries should have information about Asian Indians. Migrants who lived in the west for a decade or longer had a risk 80% higher than the more recent migrants -Risk was unrelated to the age at migration. Exposures to western life style had a substantial impact on breast cancer risk during their lifetime...

Dr. Maya Raghuwanshi MD, Associate Professor, Dept. of Medicine, Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabolism, Rutgers-Medical School, State University of NJ, Newark, NJ, USA spoke on Diabetes and Obesity. There has been a global epidemic of Obesity and Type 2 diabetes. WHO reports 1.9 billion are overweight and 600 million are obese globally, 155 million children are overweight and obese (10-25% rate of obesity) 422 million have diabetes worldwide with 29 million in US and 96 million in south East Asia. China is predicted to have the highest rise in prevalence rate (68%) followed closely by India (59%) and other Asian countries .The risk of type 2 diabetes in South Asians is about four to five times as high as that in Europeans. Around 25% of Indo-Asian adults in the UK suffer from Type 2 diabetes. Diabetes tends to develop about 10 years earlier than in Europeans. Complications of diabetes such as kidney disease and heart disease develops more commonly in south Asians South Asians have the highest death rates due to coronary heart disease in the UK. Increasing levels of obesity have been observed among South Asian children.

Dr. Pallavi Solanki, MD, FACC, FACC, Director, Advanced Heart Failure and Mechanical Circulatory Support, Rutgers-Medical School, The State University of NJ, Newark, NJ, Epidemic of Cardiac Diseases in Asian Indians. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for Asian Americans Cardiovascular disease causes more deaths for Asian Americans than all forms of cancer combined Coronary artery disease tends to occur earlier in life and in a higher percentage of the population in Asian Indians than in other ethnic groups. Risk factors are, Cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, High Cholesterol, Family history of premature Obesity, especially central obesity, Physical inactivity.

Dr. Pradip Sewoke, MD, Co-Director Interventional Cardiologist; Co-Director of Diaconat Clinic Mulhouse, France; and GOPIO International Coordinator for Europe, Belfort, France, spoke on the cardiac Issues of the Diaspora, specific risk factors and higher mortality rate due to coronary diseases in the Diaspora.

Recommendations for GOPIO

1. It is also important to increase the community partnership to address various aspects of health and wellness which will increase community capacity and program effectiveness.
- 2.-Indians in U.S.A. and U.K. appear to adopt cancer incidence patterns of the host country and hence should follow the screening guidelines for cancer recommendations by their respective cancer societies.
3. Supportive policies in sectors such as health, agriculture, transport, urban planning, environment, food processing, distribution, marketing and education in diet and exercise. Better prenatal care needed to prevent under nutrition in children. Early detection and treatment of obesity and diabetes help to prevent the complications.
4. Education, awareness to community services thru health, flyers and media.
5. Collaboration with health organizations to provide economical health insurance measures.
6. Recommendation at government levels to set up health care facilities to villages and low income level community.
7. Collaborative exchange program to send medical health care teams to provide preventive measures for underserved communities' locations.
8. Partnership with other organizations in perspective countries to set up preventive free health care facilities for education and Care.
9. There are three simple things you can do to reduce your risk for heart disease.
 - a. Know your risk factors although you can't change your age or heredity, there are many other risk factors for heart disease that you can control.
 - b. At your next doctor's appointment, talk to your doctor, bring your list of questions and a heart health scorecard to help assess your risk for heart disease.

c. Making simple, healthy lifestyle changes Reduce your risk can reduce your risk for heart disease

Reported by Dr.Asha Samant DMD, MDS, FICD, Chair. GOPIO Health and Wellness Council

NEWLY ELECTED GOPIO INTERNATIONAL TEAM SEEKS CLOSER DIASPORA TIES WITH INDIA

Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) elected a new international executive council at a warmly contested election, conducted electronically for the first time, where 208 of the 223 international delegates from 21 countries cast votes, electing Mr. Niraj Baxi of Silicon Valley (USA) as its President. Other elected officers are: Mr. Noel Lal (Sydney, Australia) as Executive Vice President, Mr. Ram Gadhavi (New Jersey, USA) Vice President, Dr. Rajeev Mehta (USA), Dr. Pradip Sewoke (France), Mrs. Suman Kapoor (New Zealand), and Mr. Rajidre Tiwari (The Netherlands) as International Coordinators. The election process was supervised by GOPIO Chairman, Inder Singh who will continue in that position.



Photo above: GOPIO 2016 Officers: From top left clockwise, NirajBaxi, Noel Lal, Ram Gadhavi, Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Dr. Pradip Sewoke, Suman Kapoor, Rajendre Tiwari, GOPIO Chairman Inder Singh

Formed in 1989 at the First Global Convention of People of Indian Origin, GOPIO has now reached most countries with a sizable Indian Diaspora population. In the past, GOPIO elections were generally held at its biennial conventions, wherein only a fraction of the international delegates could participate. However, with new technologies being available, the present election was held electronically with a record participation by 93% of the international delegates.

With India at the threshold of accepting new technologies and business investments, the new team has come up with a motto, "GOPIO Means Business" so as to attract Indian Diaspora entrepreneurs and businessmen to take more interest in investing in India in all spheres, in business, philanthropy, education, healthcare and social causes.

"With an investment and business-friendly government in India, we see a lot of opportunity for the Indian Diaspora to invest and actively participate in India's development," said President Niraj Baxi.

GOPIO Executive Vice President Noel Lal said that GOPIO would reach out to all countries where we have the Diaspora presence.

Vice President Ram Gadhavi, who has brought Gujarati Diaspora writers on a common platform in the US, plans to extend it to all Indian writers on a global GOPIO forum.

GOPIO Founder President, Dr. Thomas Abraham, who also serves as the Executive Trustee of GOPIO Foundation said that GOPIO will increase its social and philanthropic activities in India, as well as in countries with a large Indian Diaspora population.

Baxi further said that he would work towards making GOPIO the voice of any and all NRIs and PIOs and would take initiatives in growing GOPIO in all countries and regions of the world.

"In all our internal and external activities, we want to bring about fairness, transparency and accountability; there are many challenges that lie ahead of us and we need good wishes and continued hard work from everyone," Baxi continued.

GOPIO elected officers are as follows:

President - Niraj Baxi (Silicon Valley, CA, USA) - In 1984, Niraj visited various countries, becoming the first emissary of the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA), which sponsored the First Global Convention of People of Indian Origin in 1989. He coordinated NFIA and GOPIO organized the 90th Anniversary of Gadar in San Francisco. Niraj has served as Regional Vice President of GOPIO. Niraj has served in several positions at NFIA and became its President in 2003. He is also active in many civic, political and community service associations. Professionally, Niraj is a third generation insurance and financial services professional.

Executive Vice President - Noel Lal (Sydney, Australia) - Originally from Fiji, Noel joined GOPIO at the 2000 GOPIO Convention in Zurich, Switzerland. Noel served as the Regional VP and International Coordinator for the Oceania region. Noel is also a current Trustee of the Foundation for Educating Needy Children in Fiji. A Justice of Peace in Australia, Noel is an engineer by profession and currently is the Managing Director of South Pacific Engineering, Pvt. Ltd.

Vice President - Ram Gadhavi (Wayne, New Jersey, USA) - For four decades, Ram Gadhavi has been involved in various community activities, starting with the India Cultural Society of NJ where he served as its Chairman, helped build the Gandhi Mandir, was Secretary/President of the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA of CT, NJ and NY) where he organized the first India Day Parade, President of Gujarati Literary Academy of NA, Secretary of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (USA), and was the Co-Convener of the first GOPIO Convention in 1989. A chemical engineering project manager of Lummus Co., Ram, after retirement, started a home building and re-modelling company.

International Coordinator for North America - Dr. Rajeev Mehta (Piscataway, New Jersey, USA) - Dr. Rajeev Mehta is the Founder President of GOPIO-Central Jersey (and served in this capacity 2008 to 2012). He also served as Co-chair of the GOPIO Health Council (2010-2014), Co-Convener of the 2011 GOPIO International Biennial Convention held in New Jersey and Chair of GOPIO Health Council from 2014 onwards. He has organized several health camps on behalf of GOPIO Central Jersey. He is a researcher, clinician and professor at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey.

International Coordinator for Europe - Dr. Pradip K. Sewoke (Belforte, France) - Founder and President of GOPIO Belfort and Borders of East France (Switzerland, Germany), Pradip attended the GOPIO International Convention in New Delhi and New York. He supports the development of GOPIO Chapters in the francophone countries (Europe, Canada, Africa, Islands of Mauritius, Reunion, Antilles, etc.). Professionally, Pradip is an interventional cardiologist and Co-Director at Diaconat Clinic, Mulhouse, France.

International Coordinator for Oceania - Suman Kapoor (Waikato, New Zealand) - A founder President of GOPIO's first chapter in New Zealand, Suman served as chairperson of GOPIO's Women's Council and Cultural council. She was conferred the Uttar Pradesh NRI Samman Award in Jan 2016 and several other awards, including

Bharat Gaurav, Hind Rattan and NRI of the year (Times Now). She has been often referred to as GOPIO LADY in her local community, is very widely traveled globally and has participated in International conferences, including PBDs in India, Europe, Australia, Fiji, etc.

International Coordinator-at-Large - Rajindre Tewari (Amsterdam, The Netherlands) - Rajindre served as Chapter president of GOPIO-Amsterdam, followed by Country Coordinator, then EU coordinator, and later served as International Coordinator for Europe in the GOPIO Executive Council from 2012 onwards. Rajindre Tewari is the MD of an Investment Company with a strong focus on private equity and emerging market investments and chairs the India Business Council of the Dutch Council for Trade. As a Dutch PIO with roots in UP, he studied in Delhi, Antwerp and Leiden, and comes from a family that has been performing Seva for generations.

GOPIO Election coverage in newspapers.

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GOPIO CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

GOPIO-PARIS FRANCE PARTICIPATE IN AEMISTICE DAY 2017 CEREMONY

Last year, during an excavation in a village 230 km from Paris two human remains were found. On examining their belongings, they were identified as Indian soldiers of the 39th Royal Garhwal Rifles who fought World War I in France

The French Government and the Indian Embassy in France held a burial ceremony on November 12, 2017 at Laventie Military Cemetery, with full military honors and prayers conducted by a Hindu priest.

GOPIO France Paris with Mehen Poinosawmy and Vimal Khosla of GOPIO France Paris laid a wreath of flowers to pay homage to the dedication, loyalty, courage and sacrifice of the 2 Indian soldiers.

GOPIO-NORTH JERSEY - US-INDIA RELATIONS AT DECISIVELY UPWARD TRAJECTORY

The North Jersey chapter of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO-North Jersey) on the timely topic of "Where India US Relations are Heading" on Sunday, November 5, 2017 at Jyoti Restaurant in Wayne, NJ.

The event was attended by over 60 people and even though was two days before the crucial Gubernatorial and State Senate and Assembly elections, the attendance included the Deputy Speaker of the NJ State Assembly, a Senator, an Assemblyman and numerous other elected New Jersey officials.



Photo above: American Political with GOPIO officials at the seminar

Rajul Shah, President of GOPIO North Jersey Chapter welcomed the guests and attendees and spoke about strengthening US India Relations and the importance of a meaningful dialogue that the seminar represents.

Dr. Thomas Abraham, Founder and Current Chairman of GOPIO International moderated the seminar and introduced the speakers as experts in their fields. The seminar focused on two key aspects. Professor Maya Chadda talked about Geopolitical and Economic Relations while the second speaker David Nachman, a leading Immigration Attorney with NPZ Law firm talked about the Immigration issues in which India US Relations have been caught up in the recent cross currents.

Ram Gadhavi, GOPIO Intl VP, also conveyed greetings from GOPIO International and spoke about a number of activities undertaken by the North Jersey Chapter of the GOPIO.

Prakash Shah, Co-Chair of GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) and one of the original founders of GOPIO, introduced the political leaders and remembered the Indian Flag hoisting ceremony co-sponsored by GOPIO North Jersey Chapter in Clifton NJ on August 13, 2017. This was attended by over 300 people.

Addressing the Geopolitical and Economic Issues, Dr. Maya Chadda, Professor of Political Science at William Patterson University asserted that the policy shifts under president Trump has strengthened India's trust in a supportive United States, especially on the issues of terrorism and Pakistan's role in it but that still doesn't solve the basic dilemma for the US which needs Pakistan to stabilize Afghanistan and rid South Asia of terrorist safe havens. Similarly, the economic codependence between China and the US not to mention the US goal to contain North Korea will make the US hedge its bets between India and China.

"It is only in securing the Indo-Pacific where India's naval contribution is clear and can be substantial, that the Indo-US convergence is unquestionably beneficial to both. Notwithstanding these caveats, Indo-US relations have again resumed a decisively upward trajectory," Dr. Chadda added.



Photo: Panelists at the seminar, Attorney David Nachman, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, William Patterson Univ. Professor Maya Chadda and GOPIO-North Jersey President Rajul Shah

Attorney David Nachman addressed the issues of current hiatus in the issuance of H1B visas and the severe impact it is having on both the India and US High Technology Industries. According to Nachman, the US immigration and nationality law Arena is changing on a daily basis and presenting new challenges to immigration practitioners as well as for visa applicants.

"The immigration and nationality enforcement authorities nowadays are seeking to enhance information technology applications as well as security methodologies through a process called "extreme vetting" to ensure the safety of individuals in the United States," said Nachman.

"The silver-lining to the new and restrictive immigration law policies and procedures that have been implemented is that individuals are visiting our immigration law offices and making inquiries about potential options to enable them to obtain legal immigration status in the United States," Nachman added.

Nachman suggested a partial solution if India were to focus on EB2 visas. He said for some reasons, the Indian Government side has not pursued an agreement with US on EB2 Visas whereas her neighbors including Bangladesh and Pakistan have been taking a full advantage of this category. He suggested EB2 as a good solution in absence of H1B Visas.

The seminar was concluded with a vote of thanks by Dhananjay Desai, VP, GOPIO North Jersey Chapter, He particularly thanked David Nachman and NPZ Law firm for sponsoring this event.



Photo above: Seminar speakers with GOPIO International and GOPIO-North Jersey officials

Contact: Rajul Shah, President, GOPIO-North Jersey, 908-327-0605, rajulpshah@aol.com

GOPIO TRIOLET NORTH MAURITIUS PAYS TRIBUTE TO ANCESTORS

GOPIO Triloet, North Mauritius paid tribute to the Indians on the 183rd anniversary of their landing in Mauritius.

GOPIO President, Mrs. Kritilata and other members paid tribute to the Indian settlers at the Monument of Antoinette Phooliyar where in 1834, Indian laborers were sent to work at the Antoinette sugar estate.



They worked in harsh conditions to convert a barren land into a sugar estate, factories and stores. It is a place of shared history and heritage, where between the late 18th and the mid-20th centuries, hundreds of slaves and thousands of Indian and Non-Indian indentured workers and their descendants worked.

Photo above: GOPIO Triolet N.Mauritius members at Aapravasi Ghat

Now, owing to the unremitting labors of these Indians, this island is a haven of peace and prosperity. Their trials, hardships and sacrifices, resulting in the prosperity of Mauritius have now been symbolized by a lotus at this Monument of Antoinette Phooliyar - a flower that grows in mud but emanates a fragrant aroma.

Contact: Mrs. Kritilata Ram, President, GOPIO Triloet, North Mauritius, kritilata14@yahoo.com

Photo above: GOPIO Triolet N.Mauritius members at Aapravasi Ghat

GOPIO MEMBERS INTERACT WITH US CONGRESSWOMAN PRAMILA JAYAPAL

GOPIO Members interacted with Rep, Pramila Jayapal during a reception hosted in honor of the first Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal in New York on Nov. 3rd, 2017. Several community issues were discussed at the meeting including the current anti-immigrant atmosphere, H1-B Visa, DACA and Dreamers.

Rep. Jayapal emphasized the importance of everyone getting involved in the political process. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal elected in 2016 election, represents Washington's 7th District. She is the Vice Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee and also serves on the House Judiciary Committee and the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security. Before getting elected to the US Congress, Jayapal was elected to the State Legislature and the only woman of color in the Washington State Senate.

Congresswoman Jayapal is committed to ensuring that every resident of the district has economic opportunity; fairness and equity; and safe and healthy communities. She is proud of the district's role in leading the country on issues like the minimum wage, racial equity and innovation, and will work to support that work and lift it up as a model for the rest of the country.

Her focus is on ensuring income equality; access to education, from early learning to higher education, including debt-free college; expanding Social Security and Medicare; protecting our environment for our next generation; and ensuring immigrant, civil and human rights for all.



Photo: GOPIO Members with Rep, Pramila Jayapal at a New York reception. from l. to r. Dr Parveen Chopra, Jaswant Mody, Shailesh Naik, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, Viresh Sharma, Joe Simon, Prakash Shah, Rajul Shah and Prof. P. Somasundaran

The first Indian-American woman in the House of Representatives, Jayapal has spent the last twenty years working internationally and domestically as a leading national advocate for women's, immigrant, civil, and human rights.

She came to the United States by herself at the age of 16 to attend college at Georgetown University and later received her MBA from Northwestern University. She has worked in a number of industries in both the public and private sector.

GOPIO OCEANIA REGION CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF GOPIO MOVEMENT IN GOLD COAST (AUSTRALIA)

GOPIO Oceania region celebrated 10 years of active GOPIO Movement in a conference that was successfully held on 26 November 2017 at Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia under the chairmanship of Mrs. Suman Kapoor, International Coordinator of Oceania region. Delegates from Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Gold Coast and New Zealand chapters participated in the conference. Dr. Sonia Singh of Melbourne chapter was the Conference Secretary, Mr. Shyam Das of Queensland chapter was the Conference Convener, Mr. Harjit Singh of New Zealand chapter was the Conference Coordinator and Mr. Pushpinder Oberoi of Gold Coast chapter was the host whose team worked hard towards the success of the conference. Preconference meetings were held in Melbourne and Sydney (where GOPIO Canberra founder President also joined) where chapter members and presidents met Mrs. Kapoor and discussed GOPIO Oceania Region's future course of action with a clear vision was discussed.



Photos - Top: A rigorous discussion in progress, Middle: GOPIO Oceania Coordinator Suman Kapoor welcoming all the delegates, Bottom: Lighting the Lamp (L-R): Vanita Khushal, Dr. Sonia Singh, Suman Kapoor, Shyam Das, Harmohan Singh Walia and Pushpinder Oberoi

The conference started with Indian cultural rituals of lighting the lamp, the Vandana dance and Tikka ceremony by Ratna of New Zealand. Rigorous discussions were held on the progress, vision and mission of GOPIO Oceania region for the next 5 years with the collaboration of other chapters. Mr. Harmohan Singh Walia, Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, Mrs. Usha Chandra, and Mrs. Vanita Khushal, Mr. Adam Zimmerman, Mr. Vikas Sinha, Mr. Raveen Bhairo, Mr. Harjit Singh, Mr. Shyam Das, Mr. Jagdish Lodhia, Mr. Pushpinder Oberoi, Mr. Mannu Kala, Mrs. Suman Kapoor and Mr. Pradeep Kapoor participated in the discussion and gave suggestions to improve the working of GOPIO chapters in the Oceania region. Amazing intellect and wisdom wrapped with experience at one place. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Sonia Singh.

Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, President of GOPIO Sydney North West chapter and Mrs. Vanita Khushal, President of Queensland chapter highlighted their chapter's achievements. Mr. Pradeep Kapoor and Suman Kapoor presented GOPIO Waikato (New Zealand) report and Harjit Singh, GOPIO Botany highlighted chapter's activities. The goodwill messages received from VIPs including Ms Michelle Rowland MP - Federal Shadow Minister for Communications; Ms Jodi McKay MP - NSW Shadow Minister for Transport, Roads, Maritime and Freight; Ms Julia Finn MP and Mr. Peter Primrose MLC - NSW Shadow Minister for Local Government were read, welcomed and appreciated. Mrs. Kapoor spoke about greetings and congratulatory messages sent by GOPIO International Council Chairs. Melbourne chapter contributed heavily and as per Dr. Sonia Singh, she is looking forward to developing strategies for taking GOPIO Melbourne chapter to global conferences and making it the leading chapter in the world. Earlier, Mrs. Suman Kapoor welcomed all and gave insight to future vision mission and how GOPIO has proceeded in the past 10 years successfully in Oceania region. Fiji is added with two new chapters. Talented Ratna of New Zealand entertained the delegates with Kathak and Bollywood dances.



Photos: Top - GOPIO Oceania Convention Officials and Gulf Coast Organizers, L-R (Standing): Pushpinder Oberoi, Raveen Bhairo, Vikas Sinha, Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, Harjit Singh, Adam Zimmerman, Shyam Das & Harmohan Singh Walia, L-R (Sitting): Pradeep Kapoor, Vanita Khushal, Dr. Sonia Singh, Suman Kapoor & Usha Chandra; Bottom Left: Gulf Coast organizers and Dancer Ratna from New Zealand

Evening was full of laughter, involvement and delicious food. It was a roaring success in binding all, cementing the chapter links and creating goodwill among all who came to pre-conference and conference network. A similar conference has been suggested in New Zealand in the near future.

Suman Kapoor, Chairperson of the conference recognized some delegates and the host team with memento awards for their tireless work to make the conference a great success. A detailed report on the conference will be submitted later by Mrs. Suman Kapoor to the GOPIO International Executive Council.

Contact: Suman Kapoor, GOPIO Oceania International Coordinator, sumankapoor2002@yahoo.com

GOPIO-DURBAN PARTICIPATES IN THE 4TH WORLD TAMIL ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

The 4th World Tamil Economic Conference was held in Durban on Nov. 15th to 19th at the Durban International Convention Center. Attended by over 600 delegates, the conference brought together the Tamil community from Tamil Nadu in India and Tamilians under one platform to discuss business and investment opportunities.

Chairman of the Reception Committee Logie Naidoo said, "the conference was created to bring together the Indian diaspora and to strengthen economic links between the different countries."

The conference, organised by the World Tamil Economic Federation and the Madras Development Society, saw Indians from countries in East Asia, Australia, the Middle East and across African in attendance. Dignitaries includes Mauritius Vice President Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory.

Some of the speakers came from countries like Mauritius, Malaysia and Singapore. Others are from the different Indian states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. On the list of South African speakers were businessmen like Vivian Reddy, owner of Edison Power, GOPIO International Africa Coordinator Ishwar Ramlutchman and Garuba Capital CEO Rajen Pillay.

At the inauguration ceremony, His MajestyThe King, King Goodwill Zwelithini KabhekuZulu , MauritiusVice PresidentParamasivam Pillay Vyapoory andTamil Nadu Minister of Arts and Culture Dr. K. Pandia Rajan joined dignitaries from Guyana, Mauritius and India to start the conference. Topics like investment and business opportunities in South Africa & African Continent and global situation & economic opportunities were discussed.

eThekwini Municipality Deputy Mayor Fawzia Peer said that while the city was playing its role to drive economic growth with many projects and infrastructure development, such as the roll out of communication technologies, business had to contribute more to socio-economic stability and development.

She addressed the leaders saying "Business leaders, this is a call to arms for business. We need you to take a hard look at how business fits into the picture."

Although Peer felt that businesses were taking steps to partner with the government and NGOs to address the problem, she hoped that more women would apply for business funding and thus contribute to economic growth. Peer also said there was a dire need for education to equip people for jobs in the workplace.

Further Peer said that many businesses were reluctant to venture out of their comfort zone and they were not giving back enough to the society they operate in. She said, "Business has a moral obligation to the communities in which they live and work but for the business community, this is also a matter of self-preservation and we must act now"



Photo: The 4th Tamil Conference in Durban, Organizers with Durban Deputy Mayor Fawzia Peer and GOPIO International Coordinator for Africa Ishwar Ramlutchman

GOPIO International Coordinator for Africa Ishwar Ramlutchman said that since Africa tended to lag behind the other powers in 'information superhighway', South Africa was attempting to shorten the gap to increase its competitiveness in the global economy.

Ramlutchman stated that South Africa was a strong power in the global economy and the Indian Diaspora was one of the most dominant forces here. He went on to say that the unique combination of highly developed, first world economic infrastructure and a hugely emergent market economy had given rise to a strong entrepreneurial and dynamic investment environment.

He summed up the spirit of the conference by saying "For those of us that desire peace, our quest must be to work relentlessly against injustice of every sort. Wherever we may work or live in the world, building unity must be our preoccupation. This gathering is an exceptional talent of diverse skills and expertise.

GOPIO-VIRGINIA ELECTS NEW TEAM, ANNOUNCES ANNUAL GALA

GOPIO-Virginia conducted its election with a new team as follows:



President - Jay Bhandari in the center, Vice President - Sumit Kumar (Second from Left), Secretary Shweta Jain Extreme right, Treasurer Sunil Singhal next to me rest are Board members - Vishu Reddy, Rani Sisodia, Punit Jain, Dhiraj Agrawal And Alan.

GOPIO Virginia is organizing its 7th Annual Gala and award ceremony in December. Virginia Governor elect Ralph Northam as Chief guest and Ambassador of India Honorable Navtej Sarana, DCM Mr. Santosh Jha and Congressman Gerry Connolly are invited as special guest. We are honoring

Seven Indian Americans for their extraordinary achievements in Education, Economy, Medical, Science and technology, Philanthropy and Community service.

GOPIO PARIS CELEBRATES DIWALI 2017 IN STYLE

GOPIO France Paris celebrated Diwali 2017 at the Intercontinental Opera Le Grand Hotel. The event was honored by the presence of His Excellency Shri Vinay Kwatra, Ambassador of India, Mr Serge Letchimy, member of Legislative Assembly and Mr Jamet, General Secretary of the prestigious group LVMH (Louis Vitton - Moet Hennessy).

On that occasion, the GOPIO France Paris recognized the outstanding contribution done by some members of the French Indian Diaspora who have worked tirelessly in the promotion of Indian Culture, Arts, Music and Dance.

The GOPIO Achievers Award 2017 were given to: Dr Raghunath MANET, ANWAR HUSSAIN (Bollywood Maharaja), Bhavana PRADYUMNA (Carnatic music), Shobna of Diva Creations and Krishna Bagadiya (One Man show).

Chapter President Krishna Shivalingaiah briefed and illustrated the works done during the past few months by GOPIO France Paris. Mehen Poinoosawmy thanked all the local and international guests, last but not the least, our partner Jet Airways who offered 2 free tickets to fly to India to the winners of a lucky draw.



Photos: From top left to right: Anwar Hussain, DR Raghunath Manet, Bhavana Pradyмна and Lucie Ayassamy; From below left to right: Mehen Poinoosawmy, Dr Raghunath Manat, Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra and Mr Jamet of LVMH group; and last Ambassador Vinay Kwatra addressing the guests at Diwali 2017 event.

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GOPIO-ABU DHABI LAUNCHED

Aspirant members of the proposed GOPIO Abu Dhabi Chapter meeting at Abu Dhabi Social Centre under the chairmanship of Issac John Pattaniparambil, GOPIO International Coordinator, Middle East.

Among the participants were Sunny Kulathakal, GOPIO Global Ambassador, Sudhir Shetty, President of UAE Exchange, and Joy Thomas John, President, Abu Dhabi Social Centre, Johny Kuruvilla, former global chairman of World Malayalee Council, and Promitheus T.



Photo: GOPIO International officials Sunny Kulathakal and Issac John at the chapter kaunch

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GOPIO-PARIS FRANCE PARTICIPATE IN AEMISTICE DAY 2017 CEREMONY



Photo from top left: Indian soldiers remains laid to rest at Laventie Military Cemetery; Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra with officers of the Indian Army paying homage to the 2 soldiers and below GOPIO-Paris officers Kevin Ayassamy, Mahen Chuttarsingh, Mehen Poinoosawmy and Nisha Dhingra with officers of the Indian Army

Brief History: Indian soldiers were present in France during the World War I because the British government declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade of the Indian Army were ordered to mobilise and prepare for overseas service.

India had sent more than 140,000 men to the Western Front of Europe. More than 8,550 were killed and as many as 50,000 more were wounded.

Almost 5,000 of the dead have no known grave and are commemorated at Neuve Chapelle Memorial. Last year, members of GOPIO family attending the GOPIO Europe convention came to pay tribute to the Indian soldiers at Neuve Chapelle. Again this year, GOPIO France Paris and its members accompanied His Excellency, Ambassador of India, Mr Vinay Mohan Kwatra to the laying of wreaths ceremony at Neuve Chapelle Memorial.

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GOPIO NETHERLANDS ORGANIZES GANDHI PEACE WALK IN EUROPE

GOPIO-Amsterdam in Netherlands has organised the first Gandhi Peace Walk Europe on October 7th starting from the Peace Palace in The Hague where the International Court of Justice is also located. On October 8th the participants arrived at the gates of the European Parliament in Brussels (Belgium) where they handed over their Gandhi Peace manifesto to the representative of a EU-based think tank that advises the parliament and local MLA's.



Photo above:Peace Walk by EU Group at Peace Palace

The Peace Walk has been previously organised in The Hague by a local resident Frank Kanhai who is active in sports walks for a couple of years. GOPIO has acknowledged his enthusiasm and decided to uplift the ambition of peace and non-violence promotion by organising a larger audience of 60 dedicated participants who were willing to walk the 162 kilometers in teams during 2 days to Brussels. The Peace manifest was meant to promote Gandhian philosophy of Swaraj, Ahimsa and Satyagraha in the contemporary debates in Europe on Brexit, migration of labour and refugees, and Eastern European political tension combined with international politics.



Photos: GOPIO-Amsterdam organised the first Gandhi Peace Walk, Oct. 2017, From top left clockwise: Honoring Gandhi at the Peace Palace with Dy Mayor Baldewsing; GOPIO Team preparing for handing over Gandhi Manifesto and Peace Walk Team at the EU parliament.Oct. 2017

The EU commissioner for foreign affairs Mrs. Frederica Mogherini recognised this effort by mentioning this in the EU-India Summit in New Delhi and has applauded GOPIO for using this Peace Walk to promote Gandhian values.

On October 28th, GOPIO Netherlands organized an interactive session with a special speaker from India Dr. Suman Khanna Aggarwal in the Humanity House, The Hague. The theme of the session is: **Resolving Conflict in Community Relationships through Nonviolence: Creating harmonious relationships in and between communities through Nonviolence**

Dr. Suman Khanna Aggarwal is a Gandhian scholar, peace researcher and Founder President of Shanti Sahyog - a Gandhian NGO & of Shanti Sahyog Center for Peace & Conflict Resolution - a unit of Shanti Sahyog. She has been **Associate Professor** of Philosophy in Delhi University and has lectured extensively - both in India and abroad and **taught courses on Gandhian views** in Universities in North America, Japan, Denmark, Middle East and Asia, for instance, in the Universities of John Hopkins, McMaster & Bradford: she also taught in the UK, Scandinavian Universities, and Al Quds University - Palestine/Israel. She has delivered multiple lectures during the International Days for Nonviolence before.

Contact: Asha Tewari, Member of the Women's Section of GOPIO Netherlands, National Secretary of GOPIO The Netherlands, info@gopioholland.nl, www.gopioholland.nl

GOPIO-CHICAGO HOSTS 3RD ANNUAL BUSINESS CONVENTION AND GALA

Chicago Chapter of Global Organization for People of India Origin (GOPIO) hosted 3rd Annual Business Convention & Gala on September 17th, 2017 at Rosemont Hyatt Hotel. The event was attended by many corporate executives, State and local Government officials, Asian-American and small & minority business leaders and non-profit organization leaders. The objective of the event was to promote common cultural heritage and create binding relationship among business community.

Chairman and Founder of GOPIO Chicago Gladson Varghese welcomed all the Business Leaders, Political leaders and other esteemed guests. He also stated GOPIO is one of the largest Indian organizations outside India with Chapters in over 20 countries.

President and Founder Hina Trivedi in her Presidential address stated, GOPIO Chicago is in the path of rapid Growth and invited all the business leaders to be part of the organization.

Consul D.B. Bhati representing the Indian Consulate in Chicago, in his inaugural address said that business conference like this is a first step to bring Indian business owners under one umbrella, Indian Americans should expand their businesses to India as well, since India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world.'

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi congratulated GOPIO Chicago leadership for hosting a business conference and that he would support the Indian Community and GOPIO Chicago to create a business environment that will help to grow Indian businesses especially the startup companies. Linda Chapa LaVia, said that businesses are failing mainly on account of lack of proper direction to grow and paucity of required funding to launch new technology products. She also presented the Award to Lovely Varughese.

Burr Ridge Mayor Mickey Straub said that GOPIO Chicago created a platform for all the small and large Indian business owners to do business networking and grow their businesses.

Several awards were presented during the event. Business Man of the Year was given to H.R Pundit Corporation CEO Mr. K.K. Reddy' Community leader of the year award was given to Dr. Bharat Barai and Student of the year award was given to Ms. Payal Patel.

Rep. Krishnamoorthi presented the Leadership award to Gladson Varghese, State Representative Linda Chapa Lavia presented Mother's Rights Award to Lovely Varughese. Community service Awards were given for the excellent community service to Consul of India D.B. Bhati, Mayor Mickey Straub, Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, Consul of India O.P. Meena, Humanitarian Award is given to Zahid Hameed, Sponsorship recognition is given to Lisa Victoria Waller, Syed Hussaini, Avani Trivedi, Abdul Gafoor, Manoj Kumar Singamsetti, Nick Gakhhal and Nambirajan Vaithilingam.



Photo above: Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi is being honored at the banquet. From l. to r.: VinozChanamolou, Hitesh Gandhi, Chandrashekar Reddy, Savinder Singh, Laddi Singh, U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, Hina Trivedi, Gladson Varghese, Hement Trivedi, Sharan Walia

The event was attended by the following Board members: Savi Singh, Vikrant Singh, Syed Hussaini, Hement Trivedi, Sharan Walia, Nambi Vaithilingam, Vinoz Chanamolou, Chandrasekar Reddy, Manoj Kumar Singamsetti, Hitesh Gandhi and Laddi Singh.

The MC for the evening was Dr. Ajit Pant. President Hina Trivedi thanked all the dignitaries, GOPIO Board members, CEOs of various companies, Media, Sponsors and all the audience for their support for GOPIO Chicago.

The Business Conference ended with Bollywood style entertainment programs including Dances, Music and DJ followed by Indian style Dinner.



Photo above left - Gladson Varghese (Chairman), Sunil Shah, Chandrashekar Reddy, Hina Trivedi (President), D.B. Bhati (Consul of India), K.K. Reddy, Linda Chapa Livia (IL State Representative). Right - Attendees at the conference: Malla Reddy, Chandrashekar Reddy, Jose Manakatt, Sunil Shah, Nisha Mathews, Gladson Varghese, Gurmeet Singh, Aishwarya Sharma, Vibha Dave.

Contact: Hina Trivedi, President, GOPIO Chicago, auci.ht@gmail.com or Gladson Varghese, Chairman, GOPIO Chicago, gladsonvarghese@sbcglobal.net.

SPECTACULAR "CARING & SHARING" EVENT BY GOPIO-SYDNEY NORTH WEST CHAPTER

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." [John Bunyan](#)

With this motto as an objective, GOPIO-Sydney North West Chapter organized the 8th Annual "Caring & Sharing" event on Sep. 16th, 2017.

The main motto of the team is to help the needy in a transparent and shared way, thus they have been committed to raise funds for the less privileged children in remote areas of India and also for the local community needs.

In a nutshell GOPIO-Sydney North West Chapter's achievements for the last eight years are:

- Supported 4000 less privileged school children in Punjab and Haryana by providing winter clothing, shoes, drinking water facilities, ciling fans, furniture, sports items and study materials.
- Continuous support to Cancer Council of Australia, Heart Foundation, FoxG1 Foundation.
- Provided prosthetic legs to a needy high school student who lost his legs in an accident.
- Supported Manmeet Sharma, Captain Shekhwat's family for much needed funds at the time of need.
- Blue mountains bush fire, Fiji cyclone and Nepal earthquake victims were also supported during crisis times.
- Helped a cancer patient in Punjab to have medication and also donated warm blankets to poor in winter.

Over 450 guests attended the Dance and Dinner evening of "Caring & Sharing" event. The great pomp & show of the night was opened by the colourful Dhama Yoga performance. Scintillating dance performances by CK Performing Arts, Rooh Punjab Di - Bhangra group, Phulkari Gidha group, Shiamak Davar bollywood dance group, Arohana dance group kept the audience spellbound. Magician Manny and Jagpreet Grover also kept the guests entertained with their magical tricks and songs respectively.



Photos above: Dignitaries and GOPIO Sydney North West at Caring and Sharing 2017

MCs Neeru Singh, Aman Singh and Amrit Buttar were the centre of the ceremony who conducted the proceeding with utmost commitment. Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, the chapter president, in his inspiring speech thanked the sponsors and guests for their valuable contributions for the event. Team members Harmohan Singh Walia, Paramjit Multani, Ravi Singh, Sumit Joshi, Rajvinder Mangat, Baljit Pelia, Sanjeet Hooda and Baljinder Singh passionately worked to make this event successful and value adding.

The main sponsors of the event were Kalra Group of Companies, Ray White Quakers Hill, MyExpert Home loans, Sapphire Function Centre, Ruby Events and Ravi Singh. Fortune Travel, Saree Collection, Gill Transport, G & A Roadline, Bathla Group, Patel Brothers of Wentworthville & Harris Park, SarjitRahi, Tahar Mohammed, ParmajitMultani, Gurcharan Sandhu and Shagrir Khan supported the event with their contributions. GOPIO team also acknowledged Pannu Lawyers and Prime Protection Security services for their unconditional support.



Photo: Dancers at Caring and Sharing 2017 by GOPIO Sydney North West

Evergreen Memories, ARR DEE Photography and Roa Srini captured the precious moments of the event. Desi Australia, Punjab Times, Punjab Herald, Public Telegraph, Punjabi Tribune and Ajit were the media partners.

Contact: Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, President, GOPIO-Sydney North West, bkang2008@gmail.com.

GOPIO-CT ORGANIZES SEMINAR ON "EMERGIN INDIA: VIEW FROM BELOW"

GOPIO-CT organized a seminar on "Emerging India: View from Below," on September 29th in Stamford, CT. The speaker was Dr. George Mathew is the Founder Director and currently the Chairman of the Institute for Social Sciences in New Delhi. India @ 70 is progressing, and India today is way ahead of many countries in the world. Not only economy, but sports, art and culture, education, Information Technology and so on. Dr. Mathew spoke on the reality on the ground, specially with regard to poverty, hunger, malnutrition, rural development, women, health, quality of education in the villages and slums in the urban areas and so on.

According to Dr. Mathew, Indian reality is complex and multiple. It combines the most modern with the most archaic, the first world and the fourth world living together. Perhaps that itself is the best narrative. Here is a country which has not only preserved democracy, it has contributed immensely to the refinement of democracy.

The Indian model has demonstrated that democracy and development can go hand in hand. Unlike East Asia, Southeast Asia and Latin America, that followed a model-"democracy through economic growth", India has exemplified a promising model-economic development through democracy; reaching 9 % growth in 2011.



Photo top: Dr. George Mathew of Institute of Social Service speaking at a meeting organized by GOPIO-CT. Bottom: Dr. George Mathew with GOPIO-CT officials, from l. to r.: Shailesh Naik, Ravi Dhingra, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Dr. George Mathew, Prasad Chintalapudi, Meera Banta, and, Mangala and Arun Dongre

India, with its impressive growth story, had become an international flavour; from a land of "million mutinies", it has become a land of billion aspirations.

But the other side of the story; that of Bharat, is different. The trickle-down model that India has followed since 1991 has made little impact. There are about 350 million people below poverty line and 500 million are marginalised and deprived.

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GOPIO INTL. COORDINATOR FOR AFRICA ISHWAR RAM LUTCHMAN HONORED BY NATAL PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

GOPIO International Coordinator for Africa Ishwar Ramlutchman was honoured by KwaZulu Natal Provincial Government for his initiative in Unveiling Heritage Monument of His Majesty The King, King Goodwill Zwelithini. Wreath laying at the Monument and Grave of King Shaka Zulu and the unveiling of a bronze bust of His Majesty, kicked off an all-inclusive Shaka's Day and Heritage Day celebrations held in KwaDukuza.

Described as a first of its kind in this country, the bronze bust is an initiative of the world-renowned philanthropist Ishwar Ramlutchman Mabheka Zulu. Mabheka Zulu as he is affectionately known has embraced the Zulu culture and heritage having been mentored by His Majesty over the past 15 years.

Mabheka Zulu commissioned this bronze bust which is located at KwaDukuza Museum in honour of His Majesty for his contribution towards nation building.

An excited KwaZulu-Natal Premier Willies Mchunu paid tribute to Mabheka Zulu stating that he was instrumental in promoting peace and social cohesion in line with the teaching of His Majesty.

Mchunu remarked: "His Majesty has over the years been the advocate of peace and reconciliation. When intolerance threatened the fragile peace that had been achieved after years of political violence here in the province, Isilo meticulously brought together leaders from all political parties."

"He has showed determination to instil a patriotism culture that emphasises the importance of putting all South Africans first in anything leaders of government do."

"We are heartened by His Majesty's dedication towards the creation of sustainable livelihoods and his message that people should be an integral part of the fight for the eradication of poverty rings very loud."

"As the custodian of the Zulu traditions and customs, ISILO's service has underlined how tradition serves as a source of unity in our society and as a tangible proof of the common values which bind our community together. In fast-changing times, the King has been a steady compass point as he has consistently upheld the timeless values upon which our province and the country are built."

"His passionate love for the people gives us hope that he will continue to be a tireless campaigner for the development of the people of KwaZulu-Natal."

"As we celebrate both King Shaka Day and Heritage Day we want to reiterate our determination to create an equal society where values identified in the country's constitution are enjoyed by all."

"We have reiterated in many platforms that the unity of all the people of this province can be achieved if we celebrate together national days such as Reed Dance, Diwali, Rosh Hashan, Eid, Umkhosi WokweShwama and Ramadan."

"His Majesty, as our father will lead some programmes of social cohesion and moral regeneration- especially focusing on our culture to revive Ubuntu. We value the support from traditional leaders and other leaders of society including religious leaders and captains of industry. We all have a responsibility to build a stronger KZN through strong families with community leaders playing their role."

"Working together to build a stronger province economically and socially will be the fulfillment of the dreams of the pathfinders of this freedom who are too many to mention."



Photo above: from l. to r. MEC for Arts and Culture, Mrs Sithole Molio, His Worship the Mayor of Kwa Dukuza, Cllr RichardoMthembu, MEC for human settlements, Mr Ravi Pillay, Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Mr TW Mchunu, Consul General of India, Dr Shashank Vikram, Mr Ishwar Ramlutchman Mabheka Zulu, His Majesty The King, King Goodwill ZwelithiniKaBhekuZulu, Prince MG Buthelezi , Treasurer General of the African National Congress, Dr Zweli Mkhize, Queen Sibongile Dlamini, Queen ButhleMathe, Queen Thandi Ndlovu

GOPIO'S PRESENCE NOTED AT CONFLUENCE, THE FESTIVAL OF INDIA IN SYDNEY

Confluence, the Festival of India was launched on 18 September 2017 in Sydney by Indian High Commissioner to Australia Dr. A. M Gondane. This year, India's cultural diversity, both contemporary and classic, encompassing dance, music, theatre, puppetry, and cinema journeys will showcase across seven Australian cities including Brisbane, Bundaberg, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Townsville during the festival between September 23 and October 29, 2017.

GOPIO International's "Global Indian Diaspora" coffee table book was presented to High Commissioner Dr. A.M Gondane by GOPIO Life Member, Harmohan Singh Walia during the launch of Confluence in Sydney.



Photo above: GOPIO Life Member Harymohan Sngh Walia presenting the book Global Indian Diaspora to H.C. Dr. A.M. Gondane

Contact: Harmohan Singh Walia, harrywalia123@yahoo.com.au

GOPIO-TRIOLET NORTH CELEBRATES GANDHI JAYANTI

GOPIO-Kochi organized a forum to discuss issues of returned NRIs in India on Monday, August 21st at the Bharat Hotel, Ernakulam.

On 2nd October 2017, the GOPIO-Triolet North Mauritius celebrated the 148th Birthday of the Great Mahatma Gandhi also known as Bappu. This celebration was done at the Social Welfare Centre of Triolet together with the SSR Disability services centre. Mrs Kritilata Ram, the President emphasized on the Gandhian Philosophy for Poverty Eradication, Education and People's Empowerment. She said that these three main issues are very important for the proper development of a country - socially and economically.

Mrs Ram also quoted what Shakespeare said, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." But for the case of this great man was that he was neither born great nor was greatness thrust upon him. He genuinely achieved greatness as a result of associating himself with the masses of his selfless and dedicated service to human being. Mrs Boolauky, the secretary focused on the importance of the core values of Truth and non-violence in our today's society.



Photo: Gandhi Jayanti Celebration by GOPIO Triolet N.Mauritius

After a prayer, the garlanding ceremony of the bust of the Mahatma Gandhi was done by those present.

Contact: Kritilata Ram, President, GOPIO-Triolet North Mauritius, kritilata14@yahoo.com

GOPIO-NEW YORK ORGANIZES SEMINAR ON "WOMEN IN INDIA: CHALLENGES THEY FACE AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD"

GOPIO-New York and the Indian American Kerala Center joined hand to put together the seminar titled "Women in India: Challenges They Face and Opportunities Ahead at the Kerala Center on Sept. 30th. The speaker was Dr, Geroge Mathew, Chairman of Institute of Social Sciences.

According to Dr. Mathew, women's empowerment is the buzzword of the global political discourse today. The Indian politics underwent a sea change after the introduction of the new Panchayati Raj system and Municipalities by the Constitution (73rd and 74th) Amendment Act 1992, providing for reservation of 33% seats in the rural and urban local bodies. It laid a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

The presence of over a million women in local government bodies has changed the very grammar of Indian politics. Over the years, April 24 is elaborated as women's political empowerment day. It creates a sense of solidarity among elected women representatives and also they learn from each other's experiences to promote effective advocacy, partnerships and coalition-building. Every year, the elected women representatives to local bodies come to the National capital, discuss and exchange views about their achievements, problems, trials and tribulations. Awards are presented to outstanding women panchayat leaders.

Successful women leaders are those who take personal interest in planning and implementation of development projects, help strengthen the institution of panchayat, fight for women's rights related issues and develop a sense of self-reliance in the village through their leadership.



The Indian society which is still patriarchal, witnesses violence against women. Since the above mentioned 1993 Constitution Amendment, nearly 2000 women and Scheduled Caste local government elected members and aspirants have lost their lives.

Contact: Beena Kothari, beena.kothari@gmail.com

GOPIO-INLAND EMPIRE ORGANIZES A SPIRITUAL EVENT

GOPIO-Inland Empire Chapter organized a spiritual talk by an author, inspirational speaker, entrepreneur and humanitarian Srinivas Arka. Attended by about 100 people, the talk was organized at the Radha Krishna Mandir, Norwalk, CA. The event was introduced by Ms. Vasu Pawar, President of GOPIO-Inland Empire. She mentioned that the Divine Satisfaction comes from our purpose in life and our purpose in life is to Free People from their problems, concerns, and their struggles.

Arka He has developed human potential programs for the benefit of mankind and is a fascinating speaker, who took the audience into the depth of our souls and inspired everyone to embrace spirituality. We also did the launch of his Book "Bright Moon" which speaks about his own experience in life. Some of his other books and spiritual music CD's were displayed at the event.



Photo: GOPIO-Inland Empire Chapter officials with spiritual leader Srinivas Arka

Contact: Ms. Vasu Pawar, President, GOPIO-Inland Empire Chapter. Tel: 909-389-8262, Email: vasu_b_pawar@yahoo.com

TWO NEW GOPIO CHAPTERS IN INDIA ARE IN THE OFFING

GOPIO launched two new chapters in Noida and Meerut, August 2017. GOPIO Chairman, Dr. Thomas Abraham, who attended both meetings, recognized the enthusiasm of the participants.

The Noida meeting was organized by Mr. Sandeep Jain, while the Meerut meeting was organized by Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma at the University Meerut.

While GOPIO is established very well outside India, GOPIO wants to bring the NRI/PIO community closer to people in India so as to form partnerships for mutual benefit and India's development. In the last two decades, many NRIs and PIOs have returned back to India and are settling in various cities. In addition, many in India have connection with NRIs/PIOs through their children and siblings settled outside India. They are GOPIO's natural constituency with common interest along with businessmen and professionals who want to reach out NRIs/PIOs for common interest. Through GOPIO chapters in India we are trying reach them out and involve them for the larger interest of our communities and India.

A planning meeting to launch GOPIO-NOIDA was held at Hotel Golf View in Noida, near Delhi. An LOI has been filed with GOPIO International. GOPIO-Noida chapter is expected to be inaugurated in January 2017.



Photo above: Indravandan P. Shah, GOPIO Delhi/NCR President Dhiraj Ahuja, Meeting organizer Sandeep Jain, Ashwani Kumar Sharma, GOPIO Chairman, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Former Indian ambassador Ashok K. Attri, former Navy Commander Vijay Kapil, Dinesh Jain, Vijay K. Srivasatava and Ajay Goyal

Contact Sandeep Jain at 09810356126, E-mail: jainssandeep@hotmail.com.

GOPIO-Meerut Chapter launch was held on August 12th at the Seminar Hall, Department of Political Science, CCS University, Meerut. Attended by over 100 people, GOPIO International was represented by Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Academic Council Chair Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta, GOPIO-Delhi/NCR President Dheeraj Ahuja and GOPIO-Sydney Southwest President Joseph Thomas.



Photo above: from L. to R.: Dhiraj Ahuja, Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Dr. Ythomas Abraham, Joseph Thomas and Dr. Neerja Arun Gupta

Contact Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Head Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut-250 005 (U.P.), Email:sanjeevaji@gmail.com, Cell:- +91-9412205348

GOPIO-NORTH JERSEY CELEBRATES INDIA'S 70TH INDEPENDENCE DAY

At a ceremony attended by over 350 Indians, the Mayor of Clifton **James Anzaldia** and members of Clifton Councils, GOPIO North New Jersey Chapter celebrated India's 70th Independence Day. GOPIO International Vice President Ram Gadhavi talked about the Revolutionary wars waged by the largest democracy, India and the oldest democracy, USA.

GOPIO North Jersey Chapter President Rajul Shah was pleased that many women were now participating in the celebration while GICC Vice Chair Prakash Shah introduced the GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce and explained how it will help Indo-USA trade. The Mayor of Clifton and Council Members praised the contributions of Indian immigrants to American society in the field of medicine, engineering, and education.



Photo above: Bharat Rana, Ram Gadhavi, Mayor of Clifton James Anzaldi, Rajul Shah, Prakash Shah, Pravin Gadhavi and Gaurang Mehta

The Indian Flag raising ceremony was followed by the singing of the Indian and American National Anthems and light Indian refreshments.

Contact: Rajul P. Shah, President, GOPIO North Jersey Chapter, rajulpshah@aol.com

GOPIO FRANCE PARIS WOMEN'S COUNCIL CELEBRATES MOTHER'S DAY

GOPIO-Paris organized a Mother's Day celebration on June 1, 2017.

Melanie Baumgartner, co-vice president of GOPIO France, lauded the role that mothers play and Padmini Ayassamy, the Women council coordinator read a message sent by Rita Abraham, Chairperson of GOPIO International Women's council.

Helene Khim-Tit, who initiated the Sunrise School in Agra with our GOPIO Chapter, spoke about the progress that this school has made and the GOPIO Women Council conducted a fundraising program to celebrate Mother's Day for this school.

Shri Dhiraj Mukhia honored this function and the chief guest, Shri Ashutosh Shukla, Manager of Jet Airways-France distributed gold and blue traveler's cards to our GOPIO members.



Photos top left to right: Helène Khim-Tit, Manisha Warnakulasuriya, Melanie Baumgartner, Maguie Langlier, Padmini Ayassamy, Nandita Ramlogun, Manisha Warnakulasuriya and Wendy Ayassamy

Photos bottom from left to right: Mr Dhiraj Mukhia, First Secretary Embassy of India, Manisha Warnakulasuriya, Mehen Poinosawmy (GOPIO France Paris), Mr Ashutosh Shukla (Jet Airways), Grand Mother, Baby Esperanza, Anamika and Vikas Talwar (Secretary Gopio France Paris)

Contact: Mehen Poinosawmy, President, GOPIO-Paris Nord, mpoinoos@gmail.com.

GOPIO-CT ORGANIZES FLAG HOISTING AND INDIA FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE INDIA'S 70th ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

More than 300 people gathered to celebrate the first ever Stamford India Independence Day Celebration Festival in Stamford's Mill River Park on August 13, 2017. The celebrations organized by GOPIO-CT included flag-hoisting, dance performances by children and vendors selling Indian jewelry and clothes. Two restaurants - Stamford's Tangra Biryani Point and Greenwich's India Avenue - sold food at the Brown Selkowitz Carousel Pavilion.

Mr. K. Devadasan Nair, Indian Consul for Community Affairs, NYC was the chief guest along with Mayor David Martin and other officials. Also present were CT Assembly man from Glastonbury Dr. Prasad Srinivasan. The American, Indian and Connecticut flags were hoisted by Satish and Shobha Adige.

GOPIO-CT president, Mrs. Anita Bhat welcomed all the guests and Mr. Nair made a passionate speech. Dr. Beena Ramachandran served as the Master of Ceremonies. The program included the song "Saare Jahan Se Accha" sung by Sonali Gannu and a violin rendition of "VandeMataram" by Anjo Therattil. Following this, Mr. Ashok Nichani and Mr. Arun Dongre were commemorated with awards for their contribution to the community.



Photos from top clockwise: GOPIO-CT officials with dignitaries at the Stamford Govt. Center; Satish and Shobha Adige family hoisting Indian flags

While the morning program was taking place, Mr. Shelly Nichani, past President of GOPIO and Ms. Amanda Keith, Manager of the Mill River initiative were busy coordinating the vendors, restaurants and activities taking shape at Stamford's Mill River Park. Both Shelly and Amanda along with others were a big part of the planning for this huge event.

After the flag-raising at the Government center, people gathered at the park to enjoy the beautiful day; flying kites, enjoying delicious Indian food and watching the colorful dance performances by Indian children. Some of the performances were by children from two dance schools - *Mauyra Dance Academy* led by Ramya Gunashekar and *Dance X Studios* led by Jayashree Shrikanth. Nupur Daptardar and Mahika also danced to their favorite dance tune

"Udi Udi Jaye." In between people enjoyed a quiet session of "*mindfulness and meditation*," under shady trees while a gentle breeze swayed around them.

The aromas of Indian food wafting in the air lured the audience to the restaurant booths, while vendors lined one side and did a brisk business selling Indian jewelry and clothes. The children also enjoyed face painting and henna designs on their hands.



Photos above: India Independence Day Festival at Mill river Park

Overall, the celebration of India's Independence Day was a very successful event.

OPIO FRANCE JOINS TOWN OF VAL DE REUIL TO CELEBRATE BASTILLE DAY

GOPIO, France organized an Indian Cultural event to celebrate Bastille Day on July 14, 2017.

Along with the traditional French military and civilian parades and the dances and fireworks that celebrate the core beliefs of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity", GOPIO also held an Indian Cultural and Bollywood style show in Val de Reuil, a town near Paris.

Anwar Hussain and his group of Franco-Indian musicians entertained a crowd of 4000 with Bollywood songs that were enjoyed by all.



Photo from l. to r.: Flyer with GOPIO logo displayed in Val de Reuil, Bollywood show with Anwar Husain and his Franco-Indian musical group followed by huge fireworks to close the event

Contact: Mehen Poinoosawmy, President, GOPIO-Paris Nord, mpinoos@gmail.com.

GOPIO-KOCHI DISCUSSES RETURNED NRI ISSUES

GOPIO-Kochi organized a forum to discuss issues of returned NRIs in India on Monday, August 21st at the Bharat Hotel, Ernakulam. Chaired by GOPIO-Kochi President Kurian Abraham, the meeting was addressed by past president P.C. Syriac, GOPIO Human rights Council Chair Advocate Sivan Madathil, GOPIO International Coordinator for South Asia Shaji Baby John, GOPIO Central Jersey Life Member Alex Vilanilam, and Industrialist George Paulose who is President and CEO of Ames International. Chief guest for the evening was Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of GOPIO.

Most speakers brought out the issues of increasing number of NRIs being laid off in The Middle East creating larger issues for the states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and other states which have sent large number of people to The Middle East.

Dr. Abraham gave an update of GOPIO programs and upcoming Biennial Convention in Bahrain in January 2017. Dr. Abraham also gave an update about the GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) and details of its launch in the USA after its inauguration in Mumbai on January 10, 2017. He called upon to GOPIO-Kochi to initiate the GICC activities at Kochi at the earliest and suggested a tentative inauguration in January 2018.



Photo above: GOPIO-Kochi officials with speakers at the meeting on August 21st

GOPIO-CT TO HONORS FIVE DISTINGUISHED INDIAN AMERICAN ACHIEVERS AT ITS 11TH ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

"This country is the greatest nation in the history of the world because of our diversity," Sen. Richard Blumenthal

"This country is the greatest nation in the history of the world because of our diversity," Richard Blumenthal, the senior United States Senator from Connecticut, told a packed audience at the 11th annual Gala and awards nite organized by GOPIO-CT at The Hilton Stamford Hotel on Saturday, July 8th, 2017. "We have become a great nation because of your contributions. We have welcomed talent, energy and dedication. There is no greater example of this than our relationship with India; two great democracies on earth. Our nation faces biggest challenge to rule of law today than ever before."

The sold out and much anticipated event was attended by over 250 guests from across the state of Connecticut, including community leaders, elected officials, and honorees and their families. The gala included a cocktail reception, dinner, music, live DJ and dances by participants, eloquent speeches, touching life-stories and inspiring narratives on the lives of the five distinguished honorees. The program was compered by Gayatri Mahesh.

Prominent among those who had attended and spoke at the annual gala included, Congressman Jim Himes, Stamford Mayor David Martin, Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling, Connecticut State Senators Tony Hwang and Toni Boucher and CT State Assemblymen Dr. Prasad Srinivasan and William Tong.

In her presidential address, Anita Bhat described the mission and vision of GOPIO-CT under her leadership to actively participate in the local community through involvement in community events and by providing services to the Indian community at large and the society. Describing some of the programs GOPIO-CT initiates, Bhat said, GOPIO members serve in local soup kitchens, do walkathons to support cancer patients, and jointly celebrate Diwali and India's Independence Day with the members of multiple Indian groups in our community.

Congressman Jim Himes, who represents Connecticut's 4th District in the United States House of Representatives, said he was delighted to be at the event to honor the accomplishments of so many talented individuals. Congressman Jim Himes, in his felicitations, "This is the largest ever dinner you I have ever attended of GOPIO. We are experiencing one of the backsliding moments in the history of the where the core strength of this nation, the immigrants, are being threatened. There is no bigger rebuttal than the people in this room. You are scientists, educators, engineers, entrepreneurs, community activists, philanthropists, who represent the success and contributions of immigrants to the country"

Riva Gaangulay Das, Consul General of India, in her address, "The Indo-US relationship has been strengthened by who you are; your accomplishments. Though you are only 1% of the US population, you have excelled in education, income level, economic standing and contributions to the society, you are the model for all other immigrant

communities." Describing the partnership as strategic, she pointed out to the fast growing and maturing of collaboration between the two nations.



Photo - GOPIO-CT President Anita Bhat, Senator Richard Blumenthal, Rep. Jim Himes, Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das, Deputy Consul General of India Parmita Tripathi and GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham

Dr. Thomas Abraham, Founder President of GOPIO International who is also a Trustee of GOPIO-CT, chairman of the Awards Committee, said, "The evening is a celebration - a celebration not just of the accomplishments of our awardees, but also a tribute to a strong and vibrant Indian-American community in Connecticut."

"You are the community. You are not part of the community," Mayor David Martin told the Indian Americans. Pointing to the historic nature of the upcoming general elections in November, Mayor Martin urged the members to register and vote, and thus become ensure that your voices are heard."

Mayor Harry Rilling said, "I am honored to be here to celebrate among friends and am thankful for the warm welcome the Indian community has always extended to me and my family." He also congratulated GOPIO-CT for its 11 years of service and bringing the Indian community together.

The founder and CEO of T V Asia, H. R. Shah, a charismatic Indian American, who is a well-known entrepreneur, philanthropist and community leader who endeared himself as a close friend of who's who of the world, and was honored for his receiving Padma Bhushan from Govt. of India.

Ila Paliwal was honored for her contributions in the field of Performing Arts. A classically trained Indian vocalist, songwriter and producer based in New York, Paliwal released her album NAVARATNA in 2015 at the Carnegie Hall to a sold-out audience. NAVARATNA celebrates India's secular and festive spirit and is executive produced by legendary music composer AR Rahman. In 2015, She also released a video, HOLI celebrating the Indian ancient phrase Vasudev Kutumbakam.

Dr. Draupathi Nambudiri was honored for her accomplishments in the field of Medicine and Health Care. Currently serving as the Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Stamford Hospital, Dr. Nambudiri is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College and has been practicing psychiatry for over 30 years.

Dr. Rupendra Paliwal, who was honored for his accomplishments in the field of Education, currently serves as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Sacred Heart University. Prior to coming to Sacred Heart, he was a senior officer of the National Stock Exchange of India.

Captain Alpa Ladani, a distinguished 20-year Veteran of the Connecticut Army National Guard, was honored for her services to the nation. Captain Alpa Ladani was deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Germany and Bahrain in a number of different capacities. Most recently, Captain Ladani served as the Executive Officer for Forward Support Base, Headquarters Resolute Support in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Photo above - GOPIO-CT Awardees with Dignitaries and GOPIO officials. From l. to r.: Banquet sponsor Hasu Patel, H.R. Shah, Dr. Rupendra Paliwal, Dr. Draupathi Nambudiri, Captain Alpa Ladani, Ila Paliwal, Nitesh Banta, Stamford Mayor David Martin, Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO-CT President Anita Bhat and Gayatri Mahesh

GOPIO-CT President's Young Professional Achiever Award was given to Nitesh Banta. A Harvard alumni, Banta was selected for the well-known Forbes 30 Under 30 List in the New Venture Category. He is an active angel investor and is the CEO and co-founder of B12 which has been recognized as the hottest emerging startup by Nasdaq at the Founders Forum.

For the third year in a row, GOPIO-CT Scholarship for College Tuitions were given to four young students from Connecticut towards their higher education. The recipients are Praneetha Desu (Indiana University), Vivek James (University of Pennsylvania), Arjun Ahuja (University of Connecticut) and Ruhi Patel (Norwalk Community College), GOPIO-CT Scholarship Committee consisted of Shelly Nichani (Chairman) and Shobhna Bhatnagar.



Photo Top - GOPIO-CT 2017 awardees, scholarship recipients with GOPIO Officials and dignitaries; Bottom - A section of the audience at the 11th annual gala of GOPIO-CT

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GOPIO-LA ORGANIZES BLOOD DONATION CAMP IN BUENA PARK

GOPIO - Los Angeles (GOPIO-LA) Chapter organized a blood donation camp through the Red Cross in coordination with Rajput Association of America and Apna Punjabi Group at Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Buena Park on June 11.

This camp was a huge success as it exceeded the expectations of the organizers. More people than the Red Cross expected attended and volunteered to donate blood. Unfortunately, many of them had to be turned away since Red

Cross did not have resources to draw blood from all of them owing to time constraints and other limitations. Even with these restrictions, 32 vials of blood were drawn that exceeded the minimum required by the Red Cross.



Photo above: Shaila Patankar, Kalika Gupta, Navin Gupta, Baljinder Tahim, Ashley Brown (Red Cross), Rajinder Dhunna, Kewal Kanda

Members of Red Cross team were grateful to the Gurdwara Singh Sabha management and the volunteers who helped them organize and helped them to set up the camp. GOPIO-LA members Kewal Kanda, Rajinder Dhunna, and Baljinder Tahim assisted the Red Cross team and the Red Cross Team-lead Ashley Brown offered to hold future Blood Drives later.

Contact: NavinGupta, President, GOPIO-Los Angeles, navin.gupta.2004@gmail.com

GOPIO-TRIOLET NORTH MAURITIUS CELEBRATES WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

GOPIO-Triolet North (GTN) in collaboration with the Consolidated Fabrics Limited (CFL) of Solitude, celebrated World Environment Day on June 3, 2017 with the children, parents, staff, members and workers of the CFL factory.

Several activities were organized by the chapter's Youth Wing under the chairmanship of Miss Rachna Tashali Ram and committee members. The activities included wall paintings, cleaning, tidying, repairing and maintaining the children's park, as well as planting decorative and medicinal plants.

Miss Rachna spoke about creating an awareness among young people to protect the environment, water resources, coastal zones and wetlands. She said that GTN and our schools need to instill a responsibility in the children to protect the environment.



Photo - GOPIO-Triolet N.Mauritius Celebrates Environment Day, Top photo - Volunteers engaged in projects, Bottom photo - Volunteers and organizers

Mrs. Kritilata Ram, President of GTN sent a strong message to the youth and students urging them to create an environmentally conscious nation.

Contact: Kritilata Ram, kritilata14@hotmail.com.

GOPIO INTL. CAPITAL REGION ORGANIZES SUCCESSFUL MENTOR ON ROAD SEMINAR

GOPIO International Capital Region organized a highly successful event at Bombay Tandoor at Vienna, VA on June 11th.

Mr. Jagat Shah from India who is on a mission of a Mentor on Road program in USA spoke about how India is changing under Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi's vision of a new Digital India. He talked about all the programs launched by Government of India such as, Smart City and Smart Village, Digital India, Online Portal, Adhaar Card, Start-up India, Women's Empowerment, etc.



Photo: Mentor on Road program speaker Jagat Meha, Mrs. Mehta and Jay Bhandari and other officials at the seminar

The program began with a welcome speech by organizer Mr. Jay Bhandari, Washington DC Area Coordinator for GOPIO who spoke about GOPIO chapters, life membership programs and GOPIO's presence in more than 30 countries.

Mr. Jagat Shah shared the success stories of New India 3.0 and was confident that most participants will spread the word and have villages adopted.

There also was a presentation by Etihad Airways who offered two free tickets through a raffle draw on 19 Sept 2017 to all participants who attend the Mentor on Road, USA events.

Contact: Jay Bhandari, jay_bhandari@hotmail.com.

GOPIO-LOS ANGELES AREA AND NFIA CELEBRATE AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Indian American Heritage Foundation, GOPIO-LA, GOPIO-OC, GOPIO-IE, and NFIA jointly organized an American Independence Day celebration on July 4 at Tara's Himalayan Restaurant in Artesia. They also paid tribute to Indian pioneers and patriots who started India's independence movement in the USA in the early 20th century.

The celebration included a seminar that covered topics, such as America's war for Independence, Early Indian Immigration and Settlement, Struggle for US citizenship, Fight for Indian Independence (Gadar Movement), Indian Americans Philanthropic Contributions to India and USA and Indian Americans who have made India and Indian Americans Proud.

Inder Singh, in his welcome remarks, talked about Americans' sacrifices to gain freedom from the British. He also spoke about the hardships, racial violence, bigotry, and discrimination that early Indian immigrants faced in the USA.

Vasu Pawar, President, GOPIO Inland Empire, gave a detailed account of the American War for Independence while Dilip Butani, GOPIO Area Coordinator, Southern California, spoke about Early Indian Immigration and Settlement problems.

Kewal Kanda, Treasurer, GOPIO International, spoke about the Struggle of Indians for US citizenship. He said early Indian immigrants could not find good jobs, had to live in shanty homes, and were not allowed to buy property. Some of them became US citizens but the US Supreme Court ruled that Indians were not white and therefore not eligible for US Citizenship. After a long struggle, a bill was passed in US Congress in 1946 allowing 100 Indians to become US citizens annually.



Photo above: Audience at the American Independence Day Seminar. Front Row, from l. to r. Front Row, L-R: Sasha Singh, Artesia mayor Ali Taj, Cerritos City Councilman Naresh Solanki, Ashok Madan, Dilip Butani, Mrs and Mr Uka Solanki, Inder Singh

Navin Gupta, president of GOPIO-LA, explained how the Indian Independence Movement, known as Gadar Movement was started in US to free India from the yolk of British rule. Several thousand overseas Indians left their businesses and jobs and went to India to free their motherland from the British.

Ashok Madan, former NFIA President, talked about the philanthropic contributions of Indians, which far outweigh those by any other recent immigrant community to the USA.



Photo above: Amrit Bhandari, Rajinder Dhunna, Aparna Hande, Kewal Kanda, Vasu Pawar, Mohammad Yacoob, Inder Singh, Abdulgani Shaikh, Rani Kuusto, Dilip Butani, Smita Das, Ashok Madan, Navin Gupta, Baljinder Tahim, and Ajmer Singh.

Contact: Dilip Butani, GOPIO Los-Angeles Area Coordinator, dmbutani@gmail.com.

GOPIO PARIS NORD CELEBRATES "INDIA AND THE FRANCOPHONIE"

GOPIO Paris Nord celebrated "India and the Francophonie" on the 15th of April 2017 at Maison de l'Inde in Paris. This is a yearly event in the agenda of GOPIO in France.

The word "Francophonie" was used for the first time by a French geographer Onésime Reclus in 1880 to refer to all persons and countries beyond the borders of France using the French Language.

This event on "India and the Francophonie" was articulated around three core themes:

"La Francophonie": Its impact on Education and Indian Youth was showcased by three French-speaking youngsters of Indian origin. Nisha Dhingra, Anahat Kaur and Innimeï Tiroumale Chetty. Since all of them grew up in Indian cultures, they described how "Francophonie" has helped them. They highlighted the advantages for young people to have bilingual and multilingual identities because it would help them in intergroup interactions within the "Francophonie" space.

In the second part of the program, Shri Baradane Anandane, Shri Tettiravou Jean Louis and Shri Deva Koumarane spoke about the "

History of the Ancient Trading Posts of France in India." During the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1815 with the British, France had the control of the five trading posts in India: Chandernagor, Yanaon, Pondicherry, Karaikal and Mahé. Of this colonial time, there remains a French Lycée, the French Institute of Pondicherry and an Alliance Française. French is still spoken by few people here but Tamil and English are the dominant languages.



Photos - Left, Nisha DHINGRA (Jaipur), Anahat Kaur (Chandigarh) and Innimei Tiroumale Chetty (Mauritius): Middle, Nisha Dhingra, GOPIO-Paris Nord Youth Council Coordinator & Deva Koumarane speaking; Right, Etienne Dabeedin, President GOPIO French Guyana & Baradane Anandane speaking.

The last part of the program was on the "**Cultural Diversity across La Francophonie**" with Mr. Freddy Dominique ZANGA (Cameroun), Mr. Krishna Bagadiya (India) and Mr. Etienne Dabeedin (Guyana). It is essential in our increasingly diverse societies to ensure harmonious interactions among people of different cultures and the willingness to live together. GOPIO France firmly believe that India with its historical ties with France, is qualified to be part of the "Francophonie" since it is an opportunity for multilateral cooperation through the French language.

Contact: Mehen Poinoosawmy, President, GOPIO-Paris Nord, mpoinoos@gmail.com

YOGA DAY CELEBRATED BY GOPIO-TRIOLET NORTH

GOPIO Triolet North celebrated International Yoga Day on June 21, 2017 at the Le Nid Primary School. This celebration was attended by more than five hundred and fifty children and other participants.

The Yoga Session was led by Guru Nursimooloo, who demonstrated various postures of yoga and explained the benefits of Yoga. He stressed on the point that Yoga is not meant for only a certain community but is a universal philosophy that can be practiced by everyone.

Mrs Aryawattee Boolauky, the Secretary of GOPIO Triolet North (GTN) talked about the word "YOGA" which comes from the word "YOG" meaning the meeting of our soul to the absolute. Thus this session attempted to make the participants realize the mental, physical and spiritual balance through Yoga, bringing joy and contentment to themselves.



Photo - GOPIO Triolet N.Mauritius Yoga Day. President Kriti Lataram with speakers

GTN President Kritilata Ram focused on the various benefits of Yoga and she stated that there are now 5000 such events organized across the world. She appealed to the participants to keep practicing Yoga regularly to enjoy all its benefits.

According to Mr Gangulee, CEO, LIC of India, Mauritius since Yoga transforms our lives, we should keep practicing it not only on the International Yoga Day but daily.

GOPIO - TRIOLET NORTH OFFICERS VISITS SEWA ASHRAM

It is with great pride that Triolet (Rural community in the North of Mauritius) has opened its GOPIO Chapter on 23rd of September 2016. The Chapter is known as GOPIO TRIOLET NORTH MAURITIUS (GTNM). Its objectives will be in line with the GOPIO International which approved the chapter last year. The new officers are:

President: Mrs Kritilata Ram, Vice President: Mrs Bharatee Awotar, Secretary: Mrs Aryawattee Boolauky, Assistant Secretary: Mrs Gomatee Ramyeed, Treasurer: Mrs Kheshi Pooja Bhujun and Assistant Treasurer: Mr Ashish Kumar Ramyeed.

Besides the above six established main objectives, the GTNM strives hard to promote the Indian diaspora of Mauritius, nationally and internationally through cultural, economic engagements, educational, social and humanitarian undertakings. We also promote all means of expression and communication, meetings and exchanges between the Indian diaspora of Mauritius both Regional and National levels and the rest of the world. To meet the above objectives the GTNM has constituted small committees which will be called 'CELLS'. Each cell will have a Chairman or Chairperson who will take over explicit activities which re-join the objectives of the GTNM. The chairperson of these committees are: Culture/Tradition - Mrs Vidya Sookun, Academic/Educational/Vocational, Medical/Health - Dr Rajeev Samjhu, Social/Charity/Entrepreneur - Mr Sachidanand Boolauky, Youth/Sports - Miss Rachna Tashali Ram and Women's Council - Miss Zaahirah Mahamode.



Photo: GOPIO Triolet North Mauritius officers at a recent meeting: From l. to r. Front row: Poonam Mootia (Public Relation Officer), Kritilata Ram (President), Amita Boolauky (Secretary), Dr Ally Aullear (Member), Kalianjali Bhooroo (Member); back row: from l. to r.: Sudhish Boolauky (Chairperson Social Cell), Kesheerai Seebarith (Member), Lekha Vidushi (Member), Rachna Tashali (Chairperson Sport Cell) & Prerna Ramcharitur (member).

The officer visited the inmates of Calebasse, the Krishnanand Sewa Ashram and celebrated Christmas. Present at the visit were President Mrs. Kritilata Ram, some members and the Ramyead family. The visitors from the GOPIO Triolet.North Muaritiu distributed gifts and Christmas cake to the inmates who thanked them and conveyed their blessings to the families of the GOPIO members. Mrs. Ram and the others were encouraged by the experiences of the inmates and wished them a long and healthy life.

Contact: Mrs Kritilata Ram, President GOPIO-Triolet North Mauritius, kritilata14@yahoo.com

GOPIO UPPER NEW YORK COMMEMORATES "INDIAN ARRIVAL" WITH DINNER AND DANCE

GOPIO's Upper New York Chapter held its Ninth Annual Dinner and Dance on April 29, 2017, to celebrate the arrival of Indian Indentured Laborers to Guyana. This program was held at Starlite Pavilion, Richmond Hill, Queens, New York and was coordinated by Mr. Jhairam Persaud, President of the GOPIO Upper New York Chapter.

Mr. Jhairam Persaud's, welcome address was followed by two speeches and a book launch.

Dr. Sharla ShiromieKargi spoke on "Mental Health issues in Guyana and the Caribbean" with emphasis on suicide rates in those areas. Mr. Dennis Ramdin spoke about the "Vihara Poverty Project".

Dr. BasdeoMangru, a prominent author and historian, launched his book, "Champions of Indo-Guyanese Welfare, 1838-1938". His book concentrates on the individuals and groups who championed the welfare of Indian workers in the 100 years following their landing in Guyana in May1838.

Later, Dr. Leslie Ramasammy, the son of an immigrant, spoke about "Adversities and Continued Rising of Indian Immigrants". Dr. Ramasammy is the former Minister of Health and Minister of Agriculture and he referred to indenture-ship as a form of re-engineered slavery and his words resonated very well with the audience.

The GOPIO Service Awards were presented after the book launch and the former Test Cricketer and coach, Mr. Joseph Stanislaus Solomon won the Community Service Award. Mr. Solomon is currently involved in the selection process of the West Indies team and was coaching a local team in his native Guyana until retiring in 2005.



Photo above: From L to R: Mr Jhairam Persaud, Mr Martin Lalsingh, Hon. Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, Dr Ivan Shivcharran, Miss Ann Lutchmidat, Mrs. Savi Narain, Mr. Premnauth Singh, Mr. Dev Chedda, Pt. Gurdatt Jagnanan, Mr. Tony Rupnarain, Miss Patsy Leopold and Mr. Netram Rambudhan

Mr. Martin Lalsingh concluded the event by thanking the presenters and attendees.

Contact: Jhaim Persaud, President, GOPIO-Upper New York, 917-748-2430 jayperappraisals@verizon.net

GOPIO-PARIS CELEBRATES HOLI IN GRAND FERVOR

GOPIO Paris North coordinated with Le Jardin d'Acclimatation to celebrate Holi on March 19 and Shri Manish Prabhat, Deputy Chief of Mission in Paris honored this event.

Around 25000 visitors, French and Indian origins shared this great moment of happiness with colors in a spirit of love, friendship and brotherhood. Many people got a good glimpse of the rich and diverse cultures of India.



Photo above: Dancers at the Holi Festival 2017 by GOPIO-Paris Nord

Holi, the festival that rejoices over the triumph of good over evil and the onset of spring, was celebrated by the Indian Diaspora with Bangra dances and Rajasthani music. This helped to create a festive atmosphere and people of French and Indian origins shared this great moment of happiness with traditional Holi colors in a spirit of friendship and brotherhood.

With the success of this event, GOPIO, Paris now looks forward to celebrate Holi, annually in Paris.



Photo top left: Mr Countcham of Indian Cook, Miss India France 2016 Narmade Madavane, Mrs Shreevalli Countcham, GOPIO-Paris Nord President Mehen Poinosawmy. Other photos: Dancers and people playing with colors.

See more photos of the event at <https://www.facebook.com/Gopio-France-351192008380501/>

Contact: Mehen Poinosawmy, President, GOPIO Paris Nord, France, mpinoos@gmail.com

GOPIO INLAND EMPIRE CHAPTER CELEBRATES VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day was celebrated by the GOPIO Inland Empire Chapter at the Bombay Restaurant Cuisine of India in California.

While addressing the guests, the chapter president, Ms. Vasu Pawar emphasized the need for GOPIO to not only contribute towards the needs of the Indian Community in the US but also to focus on creating solidarity among Indians and promote world peace, progress, and ecological harmony.

Around 160 guests braved the inclement weather to attend this spectacular event. They were entertained by outstanding singers and entertainers who performed in an elegantly decorated hall.

The president, Ms Vasu Pawar and a team of dedicated volunteers organized this very successful event.



Photo above: GOPIO-Inland Empire Chapter team at Valentine's Day 2017 Dinner and Dancing program

Contact: Ms. Vasu Pawar, President, GOPIO Inland Empire Chapter, Tel: 909-389-8262. Email: gopioinland@gmail.com

INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO GERMANY COMPLIMENTS GOPIO BERLIN FOR CONTRIBUTING TO GERMANY-INDIA RELATIONS

In a letter to GOPIO-Berlin President, Barjinder Sodhi, the Indian Ambassador to Germany, Gurjit Singh wrote that GOPIO-Berlin has become an important link to better German-India relations.

"I wish to thank you for your tremendous nobility of spirit and community service that you render in Germany" said Ambassador Singh.

Mr. Singh commended GOPIO's efforts to promote a better understanding of India and its people in Germany. The GOPIO Berlin chapter was formed in 2006 and Mr. Singh stated that since then, GOPIO has created many opportunities for Indians in Germany to meet German leaders and this has created an improved awareness about India in Germany.

He felt that GOPIO's commitments to Indian festivals and National Days has encouraged the Indian community in Germany who have benefited from this link to their homeland. Mr. Singh recognized that the work that GOPIO is involved in not only benefits the Indian community but also forges good Indo-German relations.

GOPIO-DELHI/NCR HOSTS PADMASHRI AWARDEE H.R. SHAH

GOPIO Founder Member H.R. Shah who is also Chairman of TV Asia was honored by GOPIO Delhi/NCR Chapter on April 13th, 2017 at the Habitat Center in New Delhi, after he received Padma Shri Award from President Pranab Mukherjee at the Rashtrapati Bhavan earlier in the day. Many dignitaries were present at the reception including Mr. Dnyaneshwar Mulay, Secretary (CPV and OIA) and Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Director (Estt) at MEA, New Delhi. The program was organized by GOPIO-Delhi/NCR Chapter President Dhiraj Ahuja.



Photo above: GOPIO-Delhi/NCR Reception for H.R. Shah (in dark suit in the middle) on April 13th at the Habitat Center. To his right is MEA Secretary Dnyaneshwar Mulay. GOPIO Chapter President Dhiraj Ahuja is the extreme left.

Contact: Dhiraj Ahuja, President, GOPIO Delhi/NCR Chapter, Tel: +91 9717112272, E-mail: d.ahujagopio@gmail.com

GOPIO-SYDNEY NORTHWEST SUPPORTS NEEDY STUDENTS IN INDIA

The GOPIO Sydney North West chapter who had earlier provided basic amenities to disadvantaged children in Punjab and Haryana will now support the students of Sainik Institute, Hoshiarpur.

GOPIO Life Member Mr Harmohan Singh Walia of the GOPIO Sydney NW chapter conducted a seminar on "Personality Development, Job Hunt and Interview Skills and Quality Education" at the Sainik Institute at Hoshiarpur in February 2017 organized by Col. (Rtd) Dalvinder Singh, Campus Director and Prof. Parminder Kaur Saini. Such seminars were conducted earlier also by Mr Walia with the students of Punjabi University, Patiala and Sainik Institute, Hoshiarpur.

Mr Walia also provided financial help to seven needy students of the Sainik Institute on behalf of GOPIO Sydney NW chapter.

This seminar addressed the need for deserving but financially strained students to develop their academic, interpersonal and communication skills in order to have successful careers.



Photo above left: Harmohan Singh Walia's visit to Sainik Institute, Hoshiarpur, from l. to r.: Mrs. Neelam Walia, Mrs. Manbeen Walia, Harmohan Singh Walia, Col. (Rtd) Dalvinder Singh (Campus Director) & Prof. Parminder Kaur Saini (Head of Department, Computer Science). Photo right - Harmohan Singh Walia conducting a seminar Sainik Institute, Hoshiarpur.

Contact: Harmohan Singh Walia, GOPIO Sydney NW, Tel +61-402 842 375, harrywalia123@yahoo.com.au, www.gopiosydneynorthwest.com.au

GOPIO-SUVA CHAPTER LAUNCHED

The GOPIO-Suva (Fiji) chapter was launched in Suva on March 19th, 2017.

At the inauguration, GOPIO Oceania International Coordinator Suman Kapoor emphasized how this organization has created awareness and promoted understanding of the issues of People of Indian Origin (PIO) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

Minister for Education Dr. Mahendra Reddy stated that GOPIO has nurtured ethnic bonding and has fortified the integral bond between India and its Diaspora.



Photo above: Mr. Anil Sharma from the Indian High Commission, Mr. Vinod Patel, Mr. Vimal Deo, Mr. Viswas Sapkal (High Commissioner of India to Fiji Islands), Mr. Mahendra Reddy (Fiji Education Minister), Mr Ramesh Chand (President, GOPIO Suva Fiji), Mrs. Suman Kapoor (International Coordinator, Oceania), Mr. Vishal (Director of studies)

See Minister Dr. Mahendra Reddy's speech and GOPIO-Suiva Chapter inauguration at the YouTube Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHAt1jXOdc>

Contact: Ramesh Chand, President, GOPIO-Suva (Fiji), Tel: +6799346067, Email: r.chand@gone.go

GOPIO SYDNEY PRESENTS A CHECK TO INDIAN SUPPORT CENTER

Mr. Subbarao Verigonda, President of Indian Support Center (ISC), was honored by GOPIO Sydney, NSW to recognize this organization's work to combat Domestic Violence. GOPIO, Sydney had adopted "Domestic Violence as its annual signature event, GYAAN 2017.

At a ceremony, Verigonda was presented with a check for \$1,500 that had been raised by GOPIO, Sidney. This ceremony was attended by representatives of GOPIO Sydney and ISC, along with prominent community members including Balvinder Ruby, President, GOPIO Sydney and others.

While appreciating the help received from GOPIO, Sydney, Verigonda, spoke about the services that ISC offered and the road map ahead of them. Mr. Ruby presented trophies to the volunteers for their work to promote this cause. A male victim of domestic violence also shared his experience and the help received by him from ISC.

FoxGI, a rare genetic disorder was also highlighted by Vivek Singa of FoxG1 who discussed the work needed to be done to combat it.



Photo above: Balvinder Ruby, Amarjit Dhot and Anju Kalra, President, Vice President & Treasurer respectively of GOPIO Sydney chapter presenting a cheque for \$1500 to Subbarao Verigonda, President of ISC in recognition of their work for domestic violence.

The audiences were entertained by Shoba Inglesher who sang some Bollywood songs.



Photo above: GOPIO-Sydney members present at the check presentation to Indian Support Centre (ISC)

GOPIO-CT OFFICIALS MEET NITI AYOJ CHAIRMAN DR. ARVIND PANAGARIYA

GOPIO-CT officials were invited by Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) to a lecture by India's Niti Ayog Vice Chairman Prof. Arvind Panagariya on February 6th at the Italian Academy at Columbia University. GOPIO-CT President Anita Bhat, Immediate Past President Shelly Nichani, Treasurer Biru Sharma and Trustees, Dr. Thomas Abraham and Sanjay Santham interacted with Prof. Panagariya before and after the talk. Prof. Panagariya, holder of Jagadish Bhagvati Chair at Columbia University, is currently on leave of absence from Columbia since he took up the position in India. GOPIO-CT had hosted Prof. Panagariya earlier in 2008 after his book "The Indian Emerging Giant" was published.



Photo above: From l. to r.: Dr. Thomas Abraham, Sanjay Santhanam, Anita Bhat, Dr. Panagariya, Biru Sharma and Shelly Nichani

GYAN 2017 AT GOPIO SYDNEY

Global Young Achievers Awards Night (GYAAN) a signature event of GOPIO Sydney was organized on Feb 11, 2017 at Castle Grand Function Centre, Castle Hill to recognize and honor students of Indian origin for their outstanding performance in HSC exams.

The students, whose Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) was more than 97% included Rohan Krishnaswamy (ATAR 99.95); Pritham Kadappu (ATAR 99.95) Jash Vanjara (ATAR 99.85); Kabir Agrawal (ATAR 99.70); Sahil Arora (ATAR 99.55); Srichakra Motamarri (ATAR 99.55); Sagarika Dey (ATAR 99.45); Vanishka Virmani (ATAR 99.00); Seethal Bency (ATAR 98.40); Karthik Subbana (ATAR 98.40); Harjap Singh (ATAR 98.35) and Sunaina Salgame (ATAR 97.20).

Balvinder Ruby, President, GOPIO Sydney, congratulated the students on their outstanding performances.

Besides this academic category, two individuals of Indian descent, Prof. Vijay Kumar and Vinay Kolhatkar along with the FoxG1 Foundation Australia were recognized for their community service work.

Prof. Vijay Kumar (Community Service- Nuclear Medicine) was appointed as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM) for his service to Medical research in Nuclear Medicine and biology, and to the community. He is a Clinical Professor at Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney and was the President of Australia & New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine.

Vinay Kolhatkar (Community Service - English Literature) is the author of *The Frankenstein Candidate*. He is also the author of *A Sharia London* and the editor of *The Savvy Street*.

FoxG1 Foundation Australia (Community Service-Health) is a Health Promotion Charity with a mission to provide hope and support to individuals diagnosed with FoxG1 and to fund research and clinical trials to find a cure for this disease.



Photo above: GOPIO-Sydney officials with dignitaries at GYAN 2017. From l. to r.: Chapter Secretary Manish Gaur; President Balvinder Ruby; Prof. Michelle Simons, Dean of Education, University of Western Sydney; Kevin Conolly MP; Noel Lal, Executive Vice President. GOPIO International. Chapter Treasurer Anju Kalra; India's Consul General B Vanlalvawana; Praful Desai President Council of Indian Australians and Shail Wadhwa

This year GOPIO Sydney focused on the theme of Family Violence and the Indian Support Center, that champions the causes of the family violence, along with other concerns, was selected and \$1,330 was raised for this cause.

Although the gravity of family violence is recognized and many women seeking help from the National Family Violence helpline are Indians, most of the associations concentrate only on victim support. Balvinder Ruby emphasized the need to also identify the root causes, such as working on preventive measures through community consultation.

Photo above: GOPIO-Sydney officials with dignitaries at GYAN 2017. From l. to r.: Chapter Secretary Manish Gaur; President Balvinder Ruby; Prof. Michelle Simons, Dean of Education, University of Western Sydney; Kevin Conolly MP; Noel Lal, Executive Vice President. GOPIO International. Chapter Treasurer Anju Kalra; India's Consul General B Vanlalvawana; Praful Desai President Council of Indian Australians and Shail Wadhwa

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Photo above: GOPIO-Sydney team with awardees and VIPs

Prof. Michelle Simmons Dean of Education, presided as chief guest and thanked the sponsors for the generous support, the media for spreading the message and the performing artists to make this occasion colorful and entertaining.

Contact: Balvinder Ruby, President, GOPIO Sydney, E-mail: info@balvinderruby.com.au

GOPIO DELHI/NCR CHAPTER LAUNCHED

Under the leadership of Mr. Dhiraj Ahuja, the GOPIO Delhi/NCR chapter was launched on December 23, 2016 at the India International Centre in New Delhi. The chief guests were Mauritius High Commissioner Jagdishwar Goburdhan and GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham. In his remarks, High commissioner Goburdhan called upon all Indians to visit Mauritius.



Photo above: GOPIO-Delhi/NCR being inaugurated by lighting of the lamp by High Commissioner Jagdishwar Goburdhan as other dignitaries and GOPIO officials look on.

Chairman Abraham said that GOPIO chapters in India will serve to bring the Diaspora Indians closer to India by providing people to people contact. GOPIO Academic Council Chairperson Dr. Neerja Arun said that chapters in India can host Diaspora youth during their trips to India. GOPIO's officer for Liaison with Govt. of India Mr. Sunil Rawla was also present at the chapter inauguration. Also present was Ms. Alka Parekh, Board member of Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

Attended by over 100 people, the occasion also saw the installation of the members of the Executive Committee for this new chapter headed by Dhiraj Ahuja as its president. Other officers are: Vice President Girish C. Gupta, Secretary Harish Aneja, Treasurer Sunil Garg.



Photos topmost: The head table at GOPIO-Delhi/NCR Inauguration showing Chapter officials with dignitaries; from l. to r.: GOPIO-Delhi/NCR Vice President Dr. Girish C. Gupta, Indian Oil Refinery Director Rajesh Ahuja, Chapter President Dhiraj Ahuja, High Commissioner Goburdhan, GOPIO Intl. Chairman Dr. Abraham, Ms. Alka Parekh and Dr. Neerja Arun; middle photo: chapter officials are being inducted with Oath of Office by Dr. Abraham; bottom photo: audience at the launch.

GOPIO officers also called on Niti Ayog Vice Chairman Dr. Arvind Panagariya and discussed on how GOPIO can help mobilizing resources of Diaspora Indians for India's development.



Photo: GOPIO officials with Niti Ayog Vice Chairman Dr. Arvind Panagariya at the Yogna Bhavan, from l. to. R.: Sunil Rawla, Dr. Panagariya, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Dr. Neerja Arun and Dhiraj Ahuja

Contact: Dhiraj Ahuja, President, GOPIO Delhi/NCR Chapter, Tel: +91 9717112272, E-mail: d.ahujagopio@gmail.com

GOPIO SYDNEY-NW CHAPTER JOINS IN WELCOMING DR. A.M. GONDANE, INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO AUSTRALIA

Mr. B. Vanlal Vawna, Consul General of India, Sydney introduced the new High Commissioner to community leaders of Sydney including GOPIO Sydney and Sydney NW Chapter leaders. Dr. Ajay M. Gondane addressed the community leaders, expressed goodwill and cooperation from all community members. Dr. Gondane specifically requested for a copy of "Global Indian Diaspora" coffee book during the introductory session.

Dr. Ajay M. Gondane joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1985. He worked in various capacities in the Indian Embassies & Consulates including in Damascus, Baghdad, Vienna, Ankara and New York. He was High Commissioner of India to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands & Vanuatu. He also worked earlier in SAARC, West Asia North Africa, Bangladesh-Myanmar Divisions. He was the Coordinator for the XIV SAARC Summit in New Delhi, 2007. He was Officer on Special Duty with Dy. Speaker, Lok Sabha and a Research Fellow at the Stimson Centre, Washington D.C. He is a Doctorate in Sociology.



Photo - Dr. A.M. Gondane with some community leaders of Sydney.

For more information please contact Prof. Balkar Singh Kang (President), 0413789716 or Harmohan Singh Walia, 0402842375, harrywalia123@yahoo.com.au. Web: www.gopiosydneynorthwest.com.au

GOPIO SAN FRANCISCO-REDWOOD CITY JOINS HANDS WITH AMERICAN RED CROSS FOR FLOOD RELIEF

GOPIO SFO Redwood city joined hands with American Red Cross to respond quickly and effectively to a series of severe storms that pounded Northern California. They manned especially in San Jose and many parts of Alameda and San Mateo counties in California.

The Northern California Coastal Region teams opened six different shelters that provided a temporary haven for families displaced from their homes by local flooding. GOPIO SFO Redwood City team members provided much-needed meals and snacks, distributed relief supplies through bulk distribution efforts, and continued to meet one-on-one with affected individuals and families.



Photo: Rini Johar, President of GOPIO SFO/Red Wood City with American Red Cross volunteers Ken Burns and Janice Kent.

Contact: Rini Johar, President of GOPIO SFO/Red Wood City, rini1000@hotmail.com

GOPIO-TRIOLET NORTH MAURITIUS CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY OF INDENTURED IMMIGRANT'S ARRIVAL

Gopio Triolet (North Mauritius) President Kritilata Ram, Assistant Secretary Ramyeard and some other members participated in the annual Yaj ceremony organized by the Apravasi Ghat Indian Indentured Immigrants Arrival Celebration Committee.

This was chaired by Mrs Sarita Boodhoo at the site of the Apravasi Ghat. Two officers from the Indian High Commission attended this ceremony, along with members of the Apravasi Ghat Trust Fund Committee and officials of various non-governmental organizations.

This Yaj, held on November 2nd commemorates the landing of the first indentured laborers in Port Louis. The first Indian immigrants arrived in Mauritius on 2nd November 1834, were later followed by around 462,000 immigrants who conquered the Apravasi Ghat to change the country's history, which forever altered its demography, economy and politics.

The Yaj (sacrifice) commemoration symbolizes the sacrifices made by these immigrants. The participants paid homage to their forefathers and to Chacha Beekrumsing Ramlallah, the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Mauritius Times and a leader who worked for the recognition of the Apravasi Ghat as a historical monument. This commemoration was followed by Bhopuri songs and dances. The Bhojpuri song, Geet Gawai has been sent for inscription on the world list of intangible heritage of UNESCO for 2016, by the government, so that it is recognized as a Mauritian Cultural Patrimony.



Photo: Arrival Day by GOPIO Triolet North, Officers at the Apravasi Ghat

In her speech, Mrs. Sarita Boodhoo emphasized how in 1987, the "coolie ghat" or "immigration depot" became known as Apravasi Ghat and was established as a National Monument. Later in 2006, the Apravasi Ghat became the first Indenture Site in the world to be inscribed on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. This is the only place outside India where descendants of Indian Immigrants have created a pilgrimage spot, such as Grand Bassin or the Ganga Talao where annually, almost half a million Indo Mauritians worship. The Apravasi Ghat, Grand Basin or the Ganga Talao, and the Indian Immigration Archives at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, make the Mauritian experience unique in the history of Indian Diaspora.

GOPIO-CT ELECTS NEW TEAM FOR 2017

GOPIO-CT held its Annual General Body Meeting and Holiday Party on Friday, December 9th at the Hampton Inn and Suites, Stamford, CT. President Shelly Nichani in his report said that GOPIO-CT had its most active year in 2016 with its Awards Banquet attended by US Senator Richard Blumenthal, Congressman Jim Himes, Stamford Mayor David Martin, Norwalk Mayor Harry Rillings and several other CT state legislators. GOPIO also hosted US Senator Chris Murphy. Consul General Riva Ganguly Das, Congressman Himes and Mayor Martin with interactive sessions.

GOPIO-CT also increased the scholarship from one in 2015 to four in 2016 and hope to increase it further in 2017.

The election followed at which a new team was elected unanimously. The new team is as follows:

President - Anita Bhat, Exec VP - Pradeep Govil, VP - Bhavna Jhuneja, Secretary - Prasad Chintalapudi, Treasurer - Biru Sharma, Trustees: Sanjay Santhanam and Varghese Ninan



Photo:

GOPIO-CT's newly elected team for 2017 taking the Oath of Office, From l. to r.: Bhavna Jhuneja, Biru Sharma, Prasad Chintalapudi, Anita Bhat, Pradeep Govil, Varghese Ninan and Sanjay Santhanam

The Holiday Party followed which was also a fundraiser for Women's Mentoring Network. A sum of \$2,000 was donated to this organization which does mentoring service to single women.

Contact: Anita Bhat, President, GOPIO-CT, Tel: 203-324-2935, e-mail: abnewyork71@gmail.com

GOPIO SYDNEY-NW CHAPTER DELIVERS BASIC AMENITIES TO DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

After holding the 7th annual Caring & Sharing fundraiser event in November 2016 in Blacktown, GOPIO Sydney North West chapter's active member Neeru Singh distributed basic amenities to disadvantaged children in January 2017 in Zira (Punjab) during her visit to Punjab, India. Basic amenities include warm clothes, shoes, socks, ceiling fans, stationary, furniture, sports items etc. as per the requirement of the schools.

Around 4000 children have benefitted so far under Caring & Sharing project in the last seven years and more children will benefit when Harmohan Singh Walia visits India in February 2017.

Events like Caring & Sharing are the result of spirit we all carry to care for those in need of love and support. It's not how efficient GOPIO Sydney North West chapter is in raising funds or generating any profit, it's all about how effective we are in igniting a candle of compassion in each and every heart that support the event like this. This event wouldn't have been possible without each and every individual's contribution, especially those who attended the event, the rocking performers, generous sponsors and a team of GOPIO Sydney North West chapter.



Photo: GOPIO-Sydney NW official Neeru Singh distributes clothes, socks and shoes to school children in Zira in Punjab

GOPIO Sydney North West chapter's team include Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, Harmohan Singh Walia, Neeru Singh, Aman Singh, Paramjit Singh Multani, Amrit Butter, Ravi Singh, Sumit Joshi, Baljit Singh Pelia, Raj Singh, Baljinder Singh, Sanjeet Hooda, Tia Singh and Vinod Daniel, who worked tirelessly to make the Caring & Sharing event a grand success.

For more information please contact Prof. Balkar Singh Kang (President), 0413789716 or Harmohan Singh Walia, 0402842375, harrywalia123@yahoo.com.au. Web: www.gopiosydneynorthwest.com.au

GOPIO - WASHINGTON, DC REGION WELCOMES NEW US AMBASSADOR NAVTEJ SARNA

GOPIO Washington DC region joined with other Indian American community groups to organize a welcome reception on December 4th in Fairfax, VA for the newly appointed Ambassador to the US Navtej Sarna and farewell to Deputy Chief of the Mission Taranjit Singh Sandhu.

Over 350 people packed the elegant ballroom of the Waterford at Fair Oaks on a Sunday evening for a sparkling community reception spearheaded by activist Dr. Yogendra Gupta. Ambassador Sarna extolled the Indian-American community which he noted forms only one percent of the US population, but its members make up 9 percent of physicians, 30 percent of start-up founders in Silicon Valley, and 50 percent of the hospitality industry. These are awe-inspiring figures given the size of the community.

GOPIO's Washington DC Regional Coordinator Jaisingh Bhandari, in his welcome speech, complimented the outgoing DCM Sandhu and his contribution to strengthening relations between US and India. A plaque was presented to Ambassador Sandhu and well wishes for his tenure at Sri Lanka High commissioner.



Photo: Top - GOPIO Coordinator Jay Bhandari welcoming Ambassador Sarna. Sitting from l. to r.: DCM Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Ambassador Navtej Sarna and Dr. Yogendra Gupta; Bottom" Some of the organizers with Ambassadors Sarna and Sandho. From l. to r.: Sunil Singh; Satish Korpe; Jay Bhandari; Indian Ambassador Navtej Sarna; Dr. Yogendra Gupta; Kumar Singh; Ashok Batra; and DCM Taranjit Singh Sandhu

Mr. Bhandari speaking at the occasion emphasized how Indian community supported the embassy in many occasions to bring both countries together. He further assured the Ambassador that Indian community will support, cooperate and do everything to make efforts in strengthening US-India relations.

GOPIO-CT ORGNIZES YOUTH AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORKING

The GOPIO-CT Annual Youth and Young Professionals Networking Luncheon and Holiday Party was held on December 24th, 2016 at the Hampton Inn and Suites, Stamford, CT. The guest speaker at the event was Mr. Nitesh Banta, Co-Founder and CEO of B12, Forbes 30 under 30, who shared his path of career and his experiences in the business world.

Several young achievers including college students were also present and shared their experiences in college admissions. Speakers were Priya Gada (George Washington University), Mahir Nichani (Wake Forest University), Ashish Ramachandran (New York University) and Sanjana Chintalapudi (Lehigh University).



Photo above: Networking Party organizers, speakers and some attendees, from l. to r.: Ashwin Mathur, Pailyn Tayjasanant , Pongsa Tayjasanant, Megha Gupta, Vedant Gannu, Priya Gada, Siyan Shaikh, Pratyusha Chintalapudi, Nitesh Banta, Sanjana Chintalapudi, Rahat Nichani, Yuv Nichani, Amit Ramachandran, Ashish Ramachandran

The event was organized by the Youth Coordinator, Siyan Shaikh along with the youth co-coordinators, Rahat Nichani, Amit Ramchandran, Vedant Gannu, Rahul Kahurana and Yuv Nichani. The next annual youth networking event will take place on December 24th, 2017.

Contact: Louella D'Silva, Youth and Young Professional Coordinator, GOPIO-CT, e-mail: ldsilva@yahoo.com



Photo - GOPIO Triolet N.Mauritius Yoga Day.participants

Contact: Kritilata Ram, kritilata14@hotmail.com.

GOPIO HAS GOT TALENT - MISS INDIA FRANCE 2017 & MISS TALENT 2017



The Miss India France 2017 election, held on the 13th of May 2017, under the patronage of the Indian Embassy in France, was an exceptional event in the Franco-Indian community.

Miss India France 2017 is selected by the votes of the public and also by a board of several French and Indian personalities, from the world of fashion, beauty, arts and media. She is expected not only to have physical beauty but also good culture, knowledge about India and have the ability to communicate well.

Manisha Warnakulasuriya (N° 5 in the photo below) was crowned Miss India France 2017. Leena Doolee, the vice secretary of GOPIO France Paris also participated in this famous event. She was crowned as the 2nd runner up "Miss 2nd Dauphine 2017".

Photo - Vikas Talwar, Secretary General and Madevi Baumgartner, Vice President of GOPIO France Paris with Leena Doolee after her election

GOPIO-PARIS NORD ORGANIZES WELCOME DAY 2016 FOR INDIAN STUDENTS IN PARIS

GOPIO-Paris Nord organized Welcome and Integration Day for new students from India joining various institutions in the Paris area.

"Home is where your heart is, home is where our story begins, there's no place like home and it takes hands to build a house, but only hearts can build a home," said GOPIO Paris Nord President Mehen Poinosawmy.

It's very hard for young students to leave their homeland and come to adapt to a new way of life in Paris. In the past 5 years students leaving India for higher studies to France have increased skyrocket. A lot of exchange programs have been developed between India and France. Newly arrived students used to attend events and social gatherings to get and to find answers to their questions and make new friends.

In order to give a warm welcome to the students from India for the academic year 2016-2017, the GOPIO France Paris thus organized the "WELCOME DAY" on the Saturday 17th September 2016 with the help of Director of Maison de l'Inde, Shri Rakesh Sharma and supported by the DCM of Embassy of India in Paris, Shri Mahesh Bhatt.



Photo: Students Welcome - GOPIO-Nord officials with speakers and guests: From l. to r.: Shri Rakesh Sharma, Director of Maison de l'Inde; Nisha Dhingra, GOPIO Youth Europe coordinator; Mehen Poinosawmy, President GOPIO France Paris; Manish Bhatt, DCM Embassy of India; Dr Vimal Khosla, Honorary President GOPIO France Paris; Krishna Shivalingaya, Vice President; and Dhiraj Bhatia, GOPIO Science Council

The students were welcomed by Mehen Poinosawmy, President of GOPIO France Paris and Honorary President Dr Vimal Khosla who are both settled in France since long time after having studied and joined French companies for their careers. The event allowed students to understand the French administration system as well as job & internships process in France. Panelists shared their experience and valuable ideas with the students: GOPIO Youth Council Europe Coordinator Nisha Dhingra, Dhiraj Bhatia from the Centre de Recherche Institut Curie, Krishna Shivalingaya (Capgemini) , Vikas Talwar (Accenture) and Jonathan Sinivassane (Paris and Co, Invest). Since all of them were students in India and France, they clearly give a lot of hints and ideas for the way to success in France.

Since very long time ago, France has been a favorite destination for scientists, artists, writers from all over the world and many have made it their home. France is the 4th most popular destination for international students and its high quality of education makes it an attractive destination for Indian students.



Indian Students of Maison de l'Inde attending Welcome Day with GOPIO-Nord Chapter organizers

Photo:

This "Welcome Day" was organized for the first time and GOPIO France Paris promised to make it an annual event and has suggested it be organized GOPIO chapters in other countries.

Contact: Mehen Poinoosawmy, President, GOPIO Paris Nord and GOPIO Intl. Life Member, Tel: +33 670468885, mpoinoos@gmail.com.

GOPIO SYDNEY-NW TO ORGANIZE ANNUAL CARING AND SHARING EVENTG

The 7th annual "Caring & Sharing" event of GOPIO Sydney North West chapter will be held on November 19th, 2016 at Bowman Hall, Blacktown (Sydney).

GOPIO Sydney North West chapter provides basic amenities to disadvantaged school children in remote areas of Punjab and Haryana (India) with the help of funds raised in "Caring & Sharing" events to bring a smile on the faces of the kids. Over 3000 children have benefitted in the last seven years. Locally GOPIO Sydney North West chapter has donated money to Australian Heart Foundation, Cancer Council, victims of floods in Fiji, for the improvement of facilities for seniors in Sydney, for fire victims and many other places where natural calamity has occurred such as the Nepal earthquake. The chapter also provides financial assistance to individuals, who need help in crisis.



Photo: GOPIO Sydney-NW chapter team members at its 2015 program held at Bowman Hall, Blacktown, Australia. L-R: Baljit Pelia, Sumit Joshi, Sanjeet Hooda, Baljinder Singh, Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, Harmohan Singh Walia, Tia Singh, Amrit Buttar, Paramjit Multani, Aman Singh, Ravi Singh and Neeru Singh.

For more information please contact Prof. Balkar Singh Kang (President), 0413789716 or Harmohan Singh Walia, 0402842375, harrywalia123@yahoo.com.au. WeB: www.gopiosydneynorthwest.com.au

GOPIO DURBAN AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (DDP) ORGANIZE SEMINAR ON RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

GOPIO Durban chapter joined hands with Democratic Development Program (DDP) organized a seminar on Rights Violations on September 17, 2016 in Durban, South Africa with Dr Rama Naidu as facilitator and Dr Krishna Naidoo as speaker. The fact that 75 people attended the GOPIO / DDP meeting in wet, miserable weather conditions was a clear indication of the desire to discuss and explore issues concerning Indians in South African and the need to be proactive and constructive in plotting a path forward towards a more democratic, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa. GOPIO Durban has had many such events or had joined other organizations on occasions to march against on Human Rights Violations or added value to a specific issue.

The PIO community members have been very concerned about a specific issue regarding Indians in SA at the moment. A young African named Phumlani has been causing problems of racial divide through his organization and targeting Indians more specifically.

The Convener Dr. Krish Naidoo and panelists spoke about the art of constructive dialog and conversation, after which the participants were split into groups. The participants in each group practiced the art of listening, sought clarification, (if needed) and then commented on what was discussed. Since each person was asked for an opinion, not only were everyone's opinions obtained but each person had to take ownership of their feedback.

Many genuine and valid concerns were raised in these discussions, such as the prevalence of crime, educational concerns, tender allocations, concerns, etc.

The participants learnt that incomplete information can lead to faulty perceptions. For instance, the perception that African children are not as committed as Indian children, does not consider other factors, such as socio-economic challenges, lack of resources at schools, child-headed households, etc.



Photo above: Speaker and participants at the seminar

As a result of these discussions, the participants realized that effective dialogue helped to eliminate misconceptions and generalizations. Many of them realized that each person could contribute as an individual, as well as through organizational activities. After attending this program, they were inspired to further explore the benefits of constructive and meaningful dialogue in all spheres of their life.

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GOPIO-SYDNEY NW JOINS SYDNEYSIDERS PAYING TRIBUTE TO MANMEET SHARMA "ALISHER"

A large number of Sydneysiders gathered at Robin Thomas Reserve, Parramatta on Wednesday, 2 November 2016 to pay tributes and hold a candle light vigil for Manmeet Sharma "Alisher", 29, a young aspiring writer, singer, actor, active community member and a proud Australian citizen, was brutally set ablaze last Friday, 28 October at Moorooka in Queensland.

There were thoughts, prayers, grief and tears as the community mourned the loss of a young life by a senseless attack. There was nothing more painful than this incident and the whole community stood united as if Manmeet was their blood and soul.

GOPIO Sydney North West chapter and GOPIO Brisbane chapter have pledged to donate \$1000 each to the family of Manmeet Alisher. GOPIO was represented by Prof. Balkar Singh Kang, president GOPIO Sydney North West chapter, Harmohan Singh Walia, Sumit Joshi, Ravi Singh and Neeru Singh.

The attack was strongly condemned and prayed for Manmeet's soul to rest in peace, and May God give strength to his family and friends to bear the loss. One minute silence was observed and ardas was performed. As this was a horrendous crime in anybody's language, the community demanded full justice with sign boards in their hands as the culprit should be punished with full force of the law.

The first news flash in the media on the day of the incident was that Anthony O'Donohue, the suspect, who burned the Queensland bus driver to death at the wheel was just sitting at the scene, casually saying absolutely nothing other than "I want a lawyer".

The defense lawyer Adam Magill said, he held concerns for his client's mental health. "He's numb, I don't think he's feeling anything at this point in time," Mr Magill said as per the news. Mental health issue was raised by the lawyer Adam Magill only.

The community is asking questions that if Anthony O'Donohue is mentally sick, then how could he plan such a heinous crime, where no other person was attacked except the young Indian. Is it a sign of a mentally sick person? If he has mental health issues, then why was he not under supervision.



Photo above: GOPIO-Sydney NW participates in memorial tribute to Manmeet Sharma "Alisher"

Many migrants shared their anger and frustration at comments made on them in their day to-day life, such as "Go back to your country" etc., while going to work, in trains or in shopping centers. The common consensus was that the Australian government should amend their laws to deal with such situations, so that hate crime can be stopped.

GOPIO-CT JOINS HANDS WITH STAMFORD CITY GOVT. TO CELEBRATE INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Indians everywhere commemorate the country's independence from British rule, a long, non-violent struggle headed by Mahatma Gandhi, on August 15th. In Stamford, CT, Mayor David Martin hosted the 70th Indian Independence celebration at the Stamford Government Center. The Connecticut Chapter of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO-CT) organized the event on Saturday, August 13th. Indian Consul Sandeep Kumar was the chief guest who delivered the Independence Day message emphasizing the importance of India's independence and its adoption of democracy. He complimented Stamford Mayor Martin and GOPIO-CT for the celebration.

The program began with the singing of the national song *Vande Mataram*, followed by a welcome address given by GOPIO-CT President Shelly Nichani. Program Coordinator Santosh Gannu introduced and thanked Mayor Martin for hosting the event. Mayor Martin spoke on the diversity of the City of Stamford and said it enriched the whole city. Congressman Jim Himes and State Representative William Tong complimented the Indian American community for its contribution not only to Connecticut, but to America as well.



Photo above: GOPIO-CT officials and dignitaries at the India Independence Day Celebration at Stamford Govt. Center on August 13th. From l. to r. GOPIO Founder and Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Ravi Dhingra, Bhavna Jhuneja, Santosh Gannu, GOPIO-CT President Shelly Nichani, Mayor David Martin, Indian Consul Sandeep Kumar, Congressman Jim Himes, CT State Assemblyman William Tong, Louella D'Dilva, Amarjit Singh, Deepender Gupta and Srinivas Akarapu

The celebration included speeches, children singing patriotic songs, a colorful folk dance and the honoring of recent high school graduates. Ms. Namrata Gannu served as the MC. American and Indian flags were hoisted with the singing of both countries' national anthems. The program concluded with refreshments and lunch at Tangda Indian Restaurant in Stamford.

"By celebrating India Independence Day in America, we are celebrating the success of the democratic institutions of USA and India, the oldest democracy and largest democracy respectively," said Dr. Thomas Abraham, Founder and Chairman of GOPIO International.



Photo above clockwise from top left: Children Singing Sare Jahan se Acha, Indian Consul Sandeep Kumar raising Indian flag, India's Tri-color flying high along with US and Connecticut flags and Folk dancers at the India Celebrations.

See India Independence Day Celebration photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/sUa9QskabVymWrQi9>

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INDIA'S 70TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATED BY GOPIO CENTRAL JERSEY

On August 20, 2016 GOPIO of Central Jersey celebrated India's 70th Independence Day in Monmouth Junction, NJ. Among the invited guests were Mr. Frank Gambatese, Mayor of South Brunswick, Mr. Peter Cantu, Mayor of Plainsboro, Mr. Gerald W. Tamburro, Mayor of Monroe, Mr. Upendra J. Chivukula, Commissioner of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, Mr. Rajiv Prasad, Franklin Township Councilman, Mr. Joe Camarota, South Brunswick Councilman, Mrs. Azra S. Baig and Mr. Deven M. Patel, South Brunswick School District board members, Mr. Jaswant Modi, Advisor to GOPIO Central Jersey for Community Affairs, and Dr. Rajeev Mehta, GOPIO International's Coordinator for North America. The flag-hoisting ceremony was attended by approximately 200 people of Indian origin from both New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The program began with the singing of *Vande Mataram*, India's National Song, followed by *The Star Spangled Banner*, American National Anthem, and was highlighted by the singing of *Jana Gana Mana*, Indian National Anthem. The Indian flag was hoisted and unfurled by the Honorable Mayors of South Brunswick, Plainsboro and Monroe Counties. Included in the cultural program was a performance of Indian dances by the children from the Dance4Ever dance school. Sachin Ravindran, Om and Surbhi Guha, and children from Hindi USA of North Brunswick, courtesy of Mr. Vijay Garg of GOPIO Central Jersey, sang patriotic Indian songs. The program was enjoyed by all the attendees. All State Lenders Corp was the venue host, and refreshments were provided for all the guests courtesy of Cici's Pizza and Suma Foods of North Brunswick.

Mr. Dinesh Mittal, the out-going President of GOPIO Central Jersey, gave a brief introduction regarding GOPIO and its role in supporting the needs of the Indian Diaspora. Mr. Mittal introduced GOPIO Central Jersey Chapter's new board members and invited the attendees to help strengthen GOPIO's mission and benefit from its initiatives by joining the organization.

Mr. Tushar Patel, an active community member, encouraged everyone to participate in future GOPIO events and become members of GOPIO Central Jersey. Mr. Patel deemed the event a great success and suggested that GOPIO Central Jersey should consider events such as a parade in the future.

Mr. Suresh Reddy helped in coordination of the media and keeping the dignitaries occupied.

Mr. Gagan Deep, the in-coming President of GOPIO Central Jersey, and his wife Mrs. Anupama Gupta thanked the attendees, Actor Patel of New York Life who provided the Audio-Visual services, and 8K Radio EBC for their participation in the event. They also spoke of the various programs that GOPIO Central Jersey will be undertaking in the near future.



Photo left: Indian flag being hoisted; Officers of GOPIO-Central Jersey, from r. to l. Gagan Deep, Anu Gupta, Dinesh Mittal, Hemal Dhavalikar, Tushar Patel, Dr. Rajeev Mehta and Vijay Garg

For more information on GOPIO of Central Jersey please visit www.gopionj.org or contact: *Suresh Reddy, C: 732-259-9331 E-mail at sureshr@attglobal.net*

GOPIO-METRO WASHINGTON DC CELEBRATES ITS 9TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH MUSHAIRA-KAVI SAMMELAN

On the afternoon of August 20th GOPIO Metro Washington celebrated its 9th Annual celebration of Indian Independence Day. While it was a day filled with a number of social and community events in the metropolitan Washington area, more than 120 literary connoisseurs flocked into the Auditorium of Arlington Central Library to be the part of the Annual Yaume-Azadi (Independence Day) Mushaira-Kavi Sammelan. This annual event has been a part of Washingtonians' literary life for the last eight years.

The event was organized by the Washington Chapter of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) in collaboration with the Aligarh Alumni Association, Washington (AAA-DC Chapter). The main goal of this program was to provide a forum where diverse people could gather transcending political, religious, regional, and geographical boundaries thereby promoting the Ganga-Jamuni culture of the Subcontinent. In addition to sharing poetry this event also recognizes local poets and authors by releasing their recently published books.

In the recent past a number of poets and authors have released their books through the Mushaira-Kavi Sammelan program. Included in that group are Professor Satyapal Anand, Professor Asghar Wajahat, Dr. A. Abdullah, Dr. K. Mohan, Mr. Raj Kumar Qais, Mr. Anadi Naik, Mrs. Rashmi Sanan, Mrs. Daler Deol Aashna, and Mr. Surender Deol. This year recently published books by three poets, namely, Dr. Astha Naval, Ms. Daler Deol Aashna, and Mr. Dhananjaya Kumar, were released. Commenting on Ms. Aashna's book *Tu Hi Tu: Rumi and Tagore*, Dr. Harswarup Singh, a former Vice-Chancellor and Ambassador, said that Ms. Aashna has done a great service as she introduces these two great poets in a language that appeals to the reader. Dr. Moazzam Siddiqui, who is regarded a "walking and talking library,"

discussed Mr. Dhananjaya Kumar's books, *Lambi Udan Tak* and *Adhkhuli Khirkiyan*. He commented, "Dhananjaya Kumar's poetry captures large meanings in very few words". Remarking on Dr. Astha Naval's book *Visthaapit Man*, Ms. Suresh Chopra recognize the blooming of a young poet.

The metropolitan Washington area is fertile in producing high caliber literary personalities. The challenge remains providing sufficient time to listen to each of the poets in detail. This year the following poets shared their poetry with the audience: A. Abdullah, Abdur Rahman Siddiqui, Astha Naval, Bina Goindi, Daler Doel Aashna, Dhananjaya Kumar, Khurram Yousuzai, Qaisar Abbas, Rashid Jamal, Saqiq Bajwa, Suresh Chopra, Vandana Singh, Vipin Tripathi, Vishakha Thakar, and Yousuf Rahat. The poetry recitation session was presided by a senior poet Mr. Abdur Rahman Siddiqui.

Dr. Renuka Misra of GOPIO-DC and Mr. Masood Farshori, AAA President, welcomed both the participants and the audience on behalf of their associations. Dr. A. Abdullah conducted the program and Dr. Zafar Iqbal, coordinator of this annual event, thanked everyone for their continued support for the program.



Photo above: GOPIO-Washington DC and AAA-DC Chapter organizers with poets who participated at the Mushaira-Kavi Sammelan to celebrate India Independence Day

GOPIO-RICHMOND, VIRGINIA CHAPTER KICK-OFF MEETING

GOPIO's Washington DC Regional Coordinator Jay Bhandari visited Richmond, Virginia to attend the Kick off meeting of GOPIO Greater Richmond chapter. More than 30 members gathered at the residence of Mr. Goutam Gandhi.



Photo above: Participants at GOPIO-Richmond, VA launch

A power point presentation about GOPIO prepared by Mr. Gandhi was presented to explain the history, purpose, activities and achievements of GOPIO. Jay Bhandari answered the questions and queries about GOPIO's achievements as well as present and future activities including GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce being launched. President of Virginia GOPIO Pradeep Sharma was also present. The following people were elected for EC with the consensus of members present at the meeting.

EC Committee Members are as follows: Founding Member and Adviser: Dr. Surya Dhakar, President Goutam Gandhi, Vice President: Praveen Gupta, Joint Vice President: Vikas Kapil, Secretary: Atulya Tiwari, Joint Secretary: Aekta Chawla. Treasurer: Dr. Ram P. Gupta



Photo above: GOPIO-Richmond Officers with GOPIO Intl. representatives at the launch, Sitting the front row from l. to r. GOPIO-Richmond VP Praveen Gupta, GOPIO-Richmond Treasurer Dr. Ram Gupta, GOPIO-Virginia President Pradeep Sharma, GOPIO's Washington DC Regional Coordinator Jay Bhandari, GOPIO-Richmond President Goutam Gandhi, Advisor Dr. Surya Dhakar, GOPIO-Richmond Secretary Atulya Tiwari and others.

Bhandari congratulated the newly appointed EC members and presented the Gadar book and GOPIO pin to Goutam Gandhi and to Dr. Surya Dhakar as a token of appreciation. Program ended with lunch.

GOPIO OPENS CHAPTERS IN MAURITIUS AND REUNION ISLAND

On July 16, 2016, Dr. Pradip Sewoke, International Coordinator Europe and executive member of GOPIO International and Mr. Vasant Rambojhun launched the GOPIO Quatre-Bornes under the presence of his Excellency S.E. Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, acting President of the Republic of Mauritius.

One of the main objectives of the island of Mauritius, also known as the "Chota Bharat" or Little India, is to transform itself into a globally competitive economy with comparatively low custom duties and no trade barriers while attracting foreign investors. It is the only country in the world which has the highest percentage PIO's/ NRI's from India among all other ethnic communities.

Dr. Pradip Sewoke, executive member of GOPIO International, advocated for a GOPIO chapter in Mauritius. With the help of Mr. Hirenduth (Vasant) Rambojhun, founder-president and ex-director of the Architecture Division of the Governmental Department of Urbanism, and Mr. Shami Sewoke, international businessman and the first Life Member from Mauritius, Dr. Sewoke effort became fruitful.



Photo above: GOPIO Mauritius Quatre Bornes team: From l. to r.: Treasurer Avinash Boodhoo, Assistant Secretary Somah Waani Seetaram, Assistant Treasurer Lajput (Ramesh) Bundhoo, General Secretary Essoda (Sheila) Bundhoo, Vice President Shami Sewoke, Founder President Hirenduth (Vasant) Rambhojun

A foreign delegation of GOPIO officers was in attendance to support the launching of the first chapter in Mauritius. Dr. Pradip Sewoke represented the executive committee of GOPIO International based in New York, USA. Mr. Mehen Poinosawmy, President of GOPIO France Paris chapter, Ms. Rita Abraham, Chairperson of Women Council of GOPIO International, Mrs. Michelle Mickael, life member and five other new life members from South Africa: Mrs. Yasmin Sanglae, Dr. Terrence Kommal, Mrs. Sherita Kommal, Mrs. Pratibha Naidu and Mr. Jay Naidu.

In his welcome address President of GOPIO Mauritius Quatre Bornes, Mr. Hiren Rambhojun said, "The steps taken today will be highly beneficial to the Diaspora in the further enhancement of education, health-care, culture and socioeconomic status."

Dr. Pradip Sewoke elaborated on the future evolutions of GOPIO International (New York) and the creation of the GOPIO International chamber of commerce. GOPIO will move mainly towards business and other activities will follow as usual thus increasing the interactions between Indians of resident countries and India.

Ms. Rita Abraham illustrated the importance of the GOPIO Women's Council which is an ideal platform for women to work on local and international issues.



Photo above: GOPIO Women's Council Group with Mauritius Active President Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory (in the middle) and GOPIO women's Council Chair Rita Abraham

His Excellency Mr. Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, acting President of the Republic of Mauritius congratulated Mr. Hirenduth Rambojhun and Dr. Pradip Sewoke for launching of Quatre-Bornes, the first island chapter. He praised the notable achievements of GOPIO throughout the world: Fiji Indians human rights Issue, PIO/OCI Card, filing case on human rights violations at the UN Human Rights Commission.

Also included in the event was a performance by the dancers from Gopika Academy of Performing Arts (GAPA).

News of the launching ceremony news was successful with many people interested in joining GOPIO International as members.



Photo above left: GOPIO Mauritius Audience and right Ti Diams Receiving Donation from Mauritius Acting President Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, from l. to r. Hirenduth Rambojhun, GOPIO International Coordinator for Europe Dr. Pradip Sewoke, Ti Diams (Diabetes Association) Abdullah Dustagheer and Acting President Vyapoory

Before the close of the event, acknowledgements were made of the donations given to four institutions, namely Ti Diams, Ranger Foundation Centre and Sookhun Gaya Government School and SACIM.

Media Coverage:Gopio Quatre Bornes Mauritius - French MBC TV News : <https://youtu.be/vrUdRj3r-OA>

Samachar - MBC TV News Hindi Version - Launching of Gopio Quatre Bornes Mauritius: <https://youtu.be/97i2n6xCIQs>

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GOPIO REUNION ISLAND INAUGURATED

On July 14, 2016 Ms. Rita Abraham, Chairperson of the Women Council of GOPIO International, Dr. Pradip Sewoke, International Coordinator Europe and executive member of GOPIO International and Mr. Mehen Poinoosawmy, President of GOPIO France, Paris chapter, launched GOPIO Reunion Saint Denis. Reunion Island has around

250,000 PIO (People of Indian Origin) among its population but until now there was no GOPIO chapter affiliated to USA, New York.

The event was highlighted by the presence of the General Consul of India in Reunion, Shri Sanjeev Bhati, who commended GOPIO on the progress in different issues regarding the welfare of Indians residing abroad.

The mayor of Reunion, Saint Denis, Mr. Gilbert Annette, whose great grandmother is of Indian origin, expressed his full support of the launch of the new GOPIO chapter and appreciated the hard work of Chapter President Jean Regis Ramsamy.



Photo above - GOPIO International delegates welcomed in Reunion Island by the chapter officials: from l. to r.: GOPIO International Coordinator of Europe Dr. Pradip Sewoke, Mrs Katty Carpaille, GOPIO Paris NC President Mehen Poinoosamy, GOPIO Intl Women's Council Chairperson Rita Abraham, Saint Denis Mayor Gilbert Annette, GOPIO Reunion Saint Denis Assistant Secretary Roselyne Moutoussamy, President Jean Regis Ramsamy and Vice President Jean-Max Govindassamy

Dr. Sewoke welcomed GOPIO Reunion Saint Denis into the worldwide GOPIO family. He explained the GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce and its contributions in terms of business and relationships with India, something GOPIO can bring to Reunion Island.

Mr. Mehen Poinoosawmy explained GOPIO's achievements in Paris, France thanks to GOPIO. Youngsters, ages 18 to 26 years, of Indian origin from France, Guadeloupe and Martinique have been reconnected to India through programs such as KIP (Know India Programme) and SIP (Study India Programme). Paid internships have been made possible to qualified interns of the Diaspora to join any international company in India. These young people are the best ambassadors of these Indian companies in their countries of residence. Ms. Rita Abraham initiated the Women's Council of the chapter where a group of women vowed to work with GOPIO International to facilitate friendships and exchange ideas to develop project opportunities on both the local and international level.



Photo above: GOPIO-Reunion organizers and GOPIO International officers and some of the participants at the chapter launch. Photo shows Yogesh, Loljeeh bros, Claudia Ramassamy, Huguette Catapoullé, M.P Deltour, Chantal Acama, Luçay Permalnaick, Rita Abraham, P. Sewoke, M. Poinoosamy, Lynda Savaranin, J. R. Ramsamy and wife Marianne, Ketty Carpaille, Roselyne & Carmen Moutoussamy

President Jean Regis Ramsamy, who is a reporter, writer and historian, showered praises on the first Indians who arrived on Reunion Island and their contributions to society. He noted that July 14th is celebrated as Bastille Day and going forward it will also be remembered as the day the GOPIO Reunion Saint Denis Chapter was launched.

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INDIA CAUCUS OF THE US SENATE TO GET A BOOST WITH BOTH US SENATORS FROM CONNECTICUT COMMITTED TO JOIN

Two US lawmakers from Connecticut, Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy have publicly committed to join Senate India Caucus at community meetings organized by the Connecticut Chapter of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) last month. Senate India Caucus was started in 2004 at the initiative of the Indian American community with former Democrat Senator Hillary Clinton and Texas Republican Senator John Cornyn, who continues to serve as its Co-Chair. Senator Mark Warner is now the Co-Chair from the Democrat side. As a bipartisan body, Senators Cornyn and Warner have been working to engage Indian Americans and Indian government officials to expand cooperation between the United States and India, the world's largest democracy.

At an interactive breakfast meeting organized by GOPIO-CT last month in Stamford, CT, Senator Murphy noted the increasing cooperation between the USA and India in defense, containing terrorism, trade and commerce, education, IT and technology areas. Addressing GOPIO-CT Annual Banquet held last month, Senator Blumenthal thanked the Indian American community for its enormous contribution to America. Both Senators made their commitments in public at separate meetings hosted by GOPIO-CT.

"We want a strong set-up in the US Capitol for India which could bring more synergy in the next level of cooperation between the two largest democracies of the world," said Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of GOPIO who had initiated the effort with both the Senators.



Photo above: Connecticut's senior Senator Richard Blumenthal with GOPIO-CT Treasurer Biru Sharma and GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham

"With Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing a joint session of both houses in June, there is much more awareness of India among the lawmakers and this is the right time for the community to reach out lawmakers who are still not yet members of the India Caucus and GOPIO will continue to do such effort," Dr. Abraham added.



Photo above: GOPIO-CT officers with Senator Chris Murphy at the community reception and interactive meeting held in Stamford, CT, From l. to r.: Srinivas Akarapu, Shaielsh Naik, Sangeeta Ahuja, Biru Sharma, GOPIO-CT President Shelly Nichani, Sanjay Santhnam, Senator Murphy, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Varghese Ninan, Bhavana Jhuneja, Santosh Gannu, Louella D'Silva, Meera Banta and Anita Bhat

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GOPIO-CT HONORS FIVE INDIAN AMERICANS AND AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS AT THE 10TH ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

It was a memorable evening in every possible way. The Ballroom at The Hilton Hotel in Stamford, CT was filled with more than 200 invited guests from across the state of Connecticut, including community leaders, elected officials, and honorees and their families last month. The event was the 10th annual Gala and Awards Nite organized by GOPIO's Connecticut Chapter honoring five for their achievements and contributions to the community: The gala included a cocktail reception, dinner, music, live DJ and dances by participants, eloquent speeches, touching life stories and inspiring narratives on the lives of the five distinguished honorees.

Prominent among those who had attended and spoke at the annual gala included, US Senator Richard Blumenthal, Congressman Jim Himes, Stamford Mayor David Martin, Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling, Connecticut State Senators Tony Hwang and Carlo Leone and CT State Assemblyman Dan Carter. Earlier in the day, Connecticut's junior senator Chris Murphy addressed GOPIO-CT members.

Sachin Lawande, President and CEO of Visteon Corporation (Van Buren, MI), was recognized for his achievement as a Corporate Leader. Visteon is one of the world's leading suppliers of vehicle cockpit electronics, serving auto manufacturers around the globe. Sachin was described to be leading a rapid evolution of electronics technology and software to meet the demands of the connected car era. In his response, Lawande, while thanking GOPIO-CT, he said, "May this award given to me today be an inspiration to the younger generation."

Anjali Sharma, a Greenwich resident, was honored for Community Service and promoting philanthropy. Anjali, a Trustee of AIF, has worked tirelessly as a humanist and philanthropist to promote India's development. She won the loudest applause from the audience for her simple narration of the many efforts she and her organization do to bring a little cheer in the lives of hundreds of people in India she has been instrumental in touching with her monetary help. While acknowledging the award, Sharma applauded GOPIO and said, "Your efforts show that you are working to have our community integrated with the mainstream world."

Annapurna Duleep, a former Norwalk Councilwoman, was recognized for her contributions and achievements in Political Involvement. Anna is the first woman and South Asian to be elected Sheriff of Norwalk City in 2014. She is an ardent proponent of gun control. Duleep urged the participants and the larger Indian American community to "Join with me in the effort to take the community to the next level."

GOPIO-CT President's Young Professional Achiever Award was given to Roopa Modha of Shelton, who has been working tirelessly to promote women's issues using her legal expertise to further women's causes. Her commitment is to empower women and bring the issues of domestic violence and rape into the public domain. A lawyer by profession, She attended the White House's United State of Women Summit in 2016.



GOPIO-CT 2016 awardees, from l. to r.: David Smith, Anjali Sharma, Sachin Lawande, Annapurna Duleep and Roopa Modha

Dr. Thomas Abraham, Founder President of GOPIO International who is also a Trustee of GOPIO-CT, while introducing, David Smith of Stamford Hospital as the recipient of the Friend of GOPIO and the Indian American community award, said, "For the first time, GOPIO-CT is recognizing an employee of an institution. Mr. Smith currently serves as Senior Vice President, Strategy and Chief Strategy and Network Development Officer at Stamford Health, Stamford, Connecticut. He has worked in the Health Care Sector for over 35 years. He is an ardent supporter of good health and healthy food habits. David has supported Indian American community for many years." In his response, shared with the audience as to how he developed an increasing taste for India and the people from this large nation. He spoke about his close association with many people of Indian origin in the US.

GOPIO-CT President's Young Professional Achiever Award was given to Roopa Modha, who has been working tirelessly to promote women's issues using her legal expertise to further women's causes. Her commitment is to empower women and bring the issues of domestic violence and rape into the public domain. In her passionate address, Modha hoped that "this award will inspire many more to join in the efforts to make a just world." She urged the audience to "be passionate about making a positive impact on others."

For the second year in a row, GOPIO-CT Scholarship for College Tuitions were given to Gunja Shah, a prospective student at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy; Tanusri Balla, entering University of Pennsylvania; Nikita Jaaswal, who has enrolled to begin her studies at University of California; and Sirin Vahora, another of two, who has been accepted into Norwalk Community College's Nursing Program. GOPIO-CT Scholarship Committee consisted of Sanjay Santhanam (Chairman), Hari Srinivasan, Tara Sharma, and Priya Easwaran coordinated GOPIO-CT efforts and led the fundraising at the event to expand the scholarship to other parts of Connecticut in the coming years.

Proclamations from Governor Malloy, Mayor David Martin, and US Senator Richard Blumenthal to the awardees were read out at the awards ceremony. In welcoming the guests and dignitaries, Shelly Nichani, President of GOPIO-CT said "We are celebrating the achievements of five distinguished individuals and the award is a reflection of their remarkable accomplishments and commendable services." He said, over the last ten years, GOPIO-CT has become an active and dynamic organization hosting interactive sessions with policy makers and academicians, community events, youth mentoring and networking workshops, and working with other area organizations to help create a better future.

Congressman Jim Himes, who represents Connecticut's 4th District in the United States House of Representatives, where he is serving his fourth term, said he was delighted to be at the event to honor the accomplishments of so many talented individuals. He complimented the Indian American community as the highly educated 3.2 million strong, making tremendous contributions to the economic quality of this country.

"You are the community. You are not part of the community," Mayor David Martin told the Indian Americans. Pointing to the historic nature of the upcoming general elections in November, Mayor Martin urged the members to register and vote, and thus become ensure that your voices are heard."



Photo: GOPIO-CT 2016 awardees with dignitaries and GOPIO-CT officials

Mayor Harry Rilling said "I am honored to be here to celebrate among friends and am thankful for the warm welcome the Indian community has always extended to me and my family." He also congratulated GOPIO-CT for its 10 years of service and bringing the Indian community together.

Senator Blumenthal commented GOPIO-CT for its varied services to the community.

Niraj Baxi, the President of International GOPIO congratulated the awardees for "bringing honor to your Indian heritage. We are all very proud of you." He said he was "delighted to be part of the celebration in Connecticut honoring distinguished Indian Americans and David Smith, a Friend of GOPIO."

GOPIO OCEANIC REGION CHAPTERS CELEBRATE YOGA DAY

GOPIO Waikato Inc. marked the second International Day of Yoga in Hamilton. The day was celebrated on 19th June 2016 with great enthusiasm at the Hamilton Council Reception Lounge, under the guidance of High Commission of India Wellington. Kirikiriroa Multicultural Council Inc., GOPIO Waikato Inc., Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Life International Trust, and Art of Living all participated and will collaborate to mark the celebration each year in Hamilton.

Following a welcome message by Mr. Pradeep Kapoor, President GOPIO Waikato Inc., guests were treated to a movie sent by the Ministry of External Affairs India. The movie, a pictorial narration of the first celebration of International Yoga Day 2015, was full of messages by renowned yoga experts from around the globe and scenes of great celebrations in various countries.

Mrs. Suman Kapoor, GOPIO International Coordinator of the Oceanic Region, led a well received warm-up session in which a laughing yoga technique was used. A Seniors Well-Being talk was given by Roselyn Pillai Chitty, a cardiac nurse at Waikato Hospital. The distinguished guests, which included yoga teacher Mr. Matthew Smart of Iyengar Yoga, gave live demonstrations to a multicultural group of youth and seniors. Aloka Peacock commented, "Many participants will join regular classes soon and I came with a lot of anticipation and left with the feeling of joy, peace, and the love of life after witnessing Matthew Stewart's demonstration of yoga."



Photo 1: People assembling at the reception lounge in Waikato; Photo 2: Yoga day basket winners Rosy and Manjit with GOPIO Intl Coordinator Suman Kapoor Yoga teacher Matthew; Photo 3: Participants in yoga postures

In addition to the live demonstrations the day was filled with prayers in the Gurdwara, lunch, a tour of Korean Tea Garden at Gordonton, a raffle drawing and fruit distribution to all of the participants. The free event welcomed approximately 110 individuals from Hamilton, Morrinsville, Matamata and Auckland. With the presence of senior citizens from Auckland & local dignitaries the day was nothing short of a great celebration of life, peace, and harmony.

Similarly, the Canberra chapter of GOPIO organized a program on June 21st to observe the second International Day of Yoga. The evening included a key note speech "Yoga Today and in its Beginnings" and a panel discussion on the topic, "Yoga: More than Physical." The event was held in collaboration with the High Commission of India (HCI), the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), the Yoga Mandir (BKS Iyengar Institute, Canberra) and the South Asia Research Institute of the Australian National University (ANU).

Dr. Rakesh Malhotra, President of the Canberra chapter, in his opening and welcome speech, emphasized the significance of the chapter facilitating the partnerships with the HCI, the UNIC Canberra, the Yoga Institute and the ANU, thus enabling Canberra to embrace the second International Day of Yoga. Included

in the commemoration were free yoga lessons throughout the city, and a panel discussion in the evening reflecting on the topic, "Yoga: More than Physical," with an emphasis on benefits of and the future of yoga for generations.

Indian High Commissioner Navdeep Suri addressed the gathering on how the initial resolution by the UN General Assembly to adopt the International Day of Yoga received more sponsors than any prior resolution thus recognizing the global appreciation of the benefits of yoga. He noted that many events were being held in Fiji, Australia and across the world on that day to mark the day.

In prefacing the message of the UN Secretary-General, UNIC Canberra Director, Mr. Christopher Woodthorpe spoke of the universal support for the promotion of yoga. With its holistic nature, yoga received universal commitment by the nations to new Sustainable Development Agenda, which also is holistic in character as it charts the way to a better world for all.



Photo above: Yoga day seminar audience

Following his keynote speech 'Yoga Today and in its Beginnings', Dr. Greg Bailey from La Trobe University, joined the panel debate, with Dr. Shameem Black of the ANU, Mr. Alan Goode, Director of Yoga Mandir, and Ms. Leanne Davis, President of Yoga Australia. Dr. Shameem Black facilitated the panel discussion through many questions ranging from the influence of yoga as religious practice to yoga's contribution to health and wellness, as well as the evolving challenges in teaching yoga in the future with expectations of more than just physical benefits. While the panel recognized the growing influence of yoga across the world, as many see it as a physical activity, all three argued for the importance of yoga teachings staying firmly planted in its cultural roots.



Photo above: GOPIO Canberra EC members with partners and key speakers - Mrs Sneh Dang (Director, Women), Mrs Shilpi Bindra (MC), Dr Mohan Singh (Director, Health and Ageing) , Mr Ashok Jain (Treasurer), Mr Anil Gupta (Secretary), Dr Shameem Black (ANU), Dr Greg Bailey (Key Speaker - LaTrobe University), Dr Rakesh Malhotra (President), Mr Alan Goode (Director, Yoga Mandir), Ms Leanne Davis (President, Yoga Australia) and Mr Christopher Woodthorpe (Director, UNIC Canberra)

GOPIO's Oceania International Coordinator Suman Kapoor congratulated the chapter on having successfully met another milestone. She sent her regrets for her inability to join the event in Canberra.

Photos of the event can be viewed at the link: [GOPIO Canberra - IYD 2016](#).

Contact: Dr Rakesh Malhotra, President, GOPIO Canberra Inc., Tel: 0402 202 312; gopio.canberra.president@gmail.com

COMMUNITY CELEBRATES AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE AND INDIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE

California: America's Independence was celebrated by the Indian American community of Southern California on July 4th at the Amaya Lounge in Buena Park. With over 120 people in attendance, the celebration included a seminar paying tribute to pioneers, patriots, and Gadar heroes. The event was sponsored by the Indian American Heritage Foundation in a joint effort with GOPIO-Los Angeles, GOPIO-Orange County, GOPIO-Inland Empire, NFIA, Rajput Association of America, India Association of Inland Empire, India Association of Los Angeles, Apna Punjabi Group, and UFICA.

Inder Singh, former Chairman of GOPIO Int'l, shared the history of America's independence from the British which resulted in the signing of The Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. He also detailed the suffering and hardship which the 56 people who signed the declaration had to endure. Those in attendance were appreciative to learn of early US history. Other topics covered included, "Early Indian Immigration and Settlement Problems", "Fight for India Independence (Gadar Movement)", "Struggle for US Citizenship", "Indian Community Contributions to India and the USA", and "Indian Americans Who Made India and Indian Americans Proud."

GOPIO International Treasurer Kewal Kanda, speaking on the settlement problems of early immigrants, said that most Indians, primarily Punjabis, came to the United States in search of better economic opportunities. However, they experienced discrimination and racial prejudice from the American people. Upon graduation Indian students were not able to get jobs commensurate with their high qualifications. Indian community activists began lobbying elected representatives for the grant of

citizenship. It was a long, hard struggle, however in 1946 the US Congress passed a bill granting the right of citizenship to 100 Indian nationals annually. President Truman signed the bill into law on July 2, 1946.

Navin Gupta acknowledged the contributions of Chandrika and Ranjan Tandon who gifted \$100 million to NYU's School of Engineering in 2015, Dr. Amar Bose, founder of the Bose Corporation, who gave a majority of company stock to MIT in 2011, and Dr. Romesh Wadhvani, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur with net worth of \$2.8 billion, who has signed the Giving Pledge dedicating 80% of his wealth towards philanthropy.

Inder Singh also mentioned Nobel Prize winners Har Gobind Khorana, Subramanyan Chandrasekhar, Amartya Sen and Venkatraman Ramakrishnan. He acknowledged the contributions of political leaders Bobby Jindal, Nikki Haley, Dalip Singh Saund and Ami Bera, and many others in various fields.

The celebration ended with a vote of thanks by Abdulgani Shaikh.

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GOPIO INVESTIGATES ON THE COMPLAINTS ON CONVERSION OF PIO CARD TO OCI CARD

As per GOPIO Life Member Mr. Santosh C. Verma (Diamond Bar, CA), author of 'How to Achieve Worldwide Prosperity and Peace,' Govt. of India had announced through gazette notification that the PIO Card was now deemed as an OCI. Despite that, many PIO card holders are suffering as unnecessarily complicated requirements have been set in place for converting PIO cards to an OCI.

Mr. Verma said that Mr. B.C. Joshi, Vice Consul (OCI) at the Indian Consulate in San Francisco had told him that as of now, the existing PIO Cards were valid for the life of the holders. They can get an endorsement placed in the PIO Card, and if there is any change in the rules of OCI/PIO Cards, the same will be notified in the Websites of the Ministry of Home Affairs/Embassies/Consulates.

As per Mr. Verma's understanding, PIO cards will be considered equivalent to an OCI, and that when a PIO card holder would land at the Indian airport, a lifelong stamp would be affixed on his/her PIO card and passport. However, that does not happen. Mr. Verma says that there is a deadline, but no one seems to know about it. When he went to the CKGS web site, the instructions were very complex, the print was too small, and the application had to be completed online. He says that before CKGS was contracted to do the work, the Consulate was doing it, a VISA camp was held in Los Angeles almost every month, and paper forms were readily available. Today, there are many PIOs who have still not received their OCI for after a year, and their applications are being rejected again and again. They have paid money three times but have not received any refunds. If one searches on HELP for complaints against CKGS, they will find many complaints. Even Cox and Kings (CKGS) has many complaints about the process, they do not even refund the money, and are un-responsive to inquiries. Moreover, Mr. Verma is not aware of a channel where one can submit a complaint.

Mr. Verma requests that there should be hard copies of the forms as many do not know how to complete forms online because of a language problem, old age, etc., and that the Consulate General should stamp it as per prior instructions. GOPIO forwarded Mr. Verma's emails to the Indian Consulate in New York.

Dr. Manoj K. Mohapatra, Deputy Consul General at the Consulate General of India in New York responded as follows:

The deadline for receiving application for conversion of PIO to OCI has been extended to December 31, 2016. Only the copies of the original passport and PIO card are required for this conversion.

There is no fee except the processing and courier fees charged by CKGS. Dr. Mohapatra also mentioned that the Consulate General of India, New York would be the first Consulate where the OCI card in lieu would be printed at its own facility.

Contact: Dr. Rajeev Mehta, GOPIO's International Coordinator for North America, rajimehta@hotmail.com

GOPIO PARTICIPATES IN INDIAN AMBASSADOR'S VISIT TO GUADELOUPE AND MARTINIQUE

Indian Ambassador to France, Dr. Mohan Kumar, accompanied by his wife Mala Kumar and Minister Consul at the Indian Embassy in France, Shri Jaiswal, made a visit in Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint-Martin in late February and early March, 2016.

This visit is a consequence of the official visit to France in April 2015 of Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Shri Narendra Modi who expressed his willingness to promote economic cooperation between India and France and particularly with the French overseas departments and territories.

Ambassador Kumar presented to the economic actors and French Caribbean Indian Diaspora, the "Made in India" program which is intended to develop its promising economic ties with India and France in all fields: industry and trade, tourism, culture, environment, health and wellness.

Ambassador Kumar met authorities in Guadeloupe including Prefect, Conseil Generale, Conseil Regional and some mayors of different municipalities. He attended a conference with a theme 'Made in India.'



Photos above: GOPIO Guadeloupe hosting reception and meeting Indian Ambassador to France Dr. Mohan Kumar and Mrs. Mala Kumar

According to the newly appointed GOPIO International Coordinator for Caribbean Region, Claude Sheikboudhou, the immediate impact of this conference and the other meetings was that the authorities are planning now to create a Guadeloupe house in India.

GOPIO Guadeloupe Chapter also passed a resolution to open a liaison office in India to help all the investors from India and to provide information on the island country. Another outcome was that Pole Emploi (Unemployment Government agency) asked the GOPIO Chapter to study a way where the agency can send people to those companies who have a new business project.

In Martinique the delegation was welcomed at Saint Pierre, a famous town, on Wednesday, March 2nd 2016. The delegation with the Ambassador was welcomed on the steps of the Town Hall by the Rainbow Robert folkloric ballet in a special presentation of Martinican tradition. In his speech, Saint Pierre Mayor Mons. Christian Rapha recalled the Indian dimension in this Martinican culture.



Photos above: Martinique Indian Community Reception for Ambassador Kumat and Mrs. Mala Kumar

The sub-prefect Etienne Guillet said that in his district of TrinitésurMer, there was a strong presence of people of Indian origin among the local population.

Ambassador Kumar was delighted with his visit to Saint Pierre. He felt it was a very beautiful city, with impressive sceneries and a group of dynamic Indo-Martiniquaise population. He was very touched by the reception from all in Martinique.

The Mayor presented to Ambassador Dr. Kumar, the medal of the city as an official invitation to commemorate the 163rd anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian immigrants to Saint Pierre on May 6, 2016. At the end of this meeting, Dr. Mohan Kumar and Mr. Christian Rapha planted a small tree of South Indian origin called "Vêpelé" in Tamil, in the courtyard of Town Hall. The delegation then visited the museum of St. Pierre.

Lucienne Sacarabany, president of GOPIO Martinique was very satisfied with this visit. Sacarabany said, "I think it will help to have more trades with India. We would like to especially develop the Know India program in which Indian states reimburse airfare to young people who traveled to India to discover their roots."

This visit is the first step in the preparation of the festivities planned on the 6th of May 2016 to commemorate the 163rd anniversary of the first arrival of the Indians in the Island of Martinique. Indeed

on the 6th of May 1853, a boat named "Aurelie" with 314 Indian immigrants onboard landed in Saint Pierre to work in the sugar plantations.

Compliments are due to GOPIO Guadeloupe and Martinique for GOPIO's active participation in making the visit of the Ambassador of India to the French Antilles, a great success.

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GOPIO VICE PRESIDENT RAM GADHAVI FELICITATED AT GUJARAT VIDYAPITH

Newly elected. GOPIO Vice President Ram Gadhavi who is also President Gujarati Literary academy of North America was felicitated at Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad on March 8th, 2016. At the program organized at the seminar hall of Vidyapith, Gadhvi delivered a lecture on "American Gujarati Diaspora Literature: Conservation, Preservation and Evaluation." The program was organized by Gujarat Literary Academy of Gandhi Nagar.

A renowned writer and retired IAS Officer, Mr. Bhagyesh Jha, Chairman of the Gujarat Sahitya Academy delivered the presidential address. At this occasion Prof. Balvant Jani, Ex. Vice-Chancellor and Ex. Dean of Faculty of Arts at Saurashtra University (Rajkot), as well as Director of Gardi Research Institute for Diaspora Studies (GRIDS) and Editor of Gujarati Diaspora Literature, honored Gadhavi with a shawl and a citation. Prof. Jani gave a brief introduction of Gadhvi's contributions abroad and said that he has been a cultural ambassador of Gujarat. Jnanpith award winner and Gujarati writer Shri. Raghuvir Chaudhri also spoke about Gadhvi's work in literature. After the felicitation, program continued with performances by musicians, singers and folk artists.



Photo top: GOPIO VP Ram Gadhavi speaking at Gujarat Vidyapith. Seated from l. to r.: Prof. Kanu Nayak, Trustee of Gujarat Vidyapith, Bhagyesh Jha and Prof. Balvant Jani; Photo bottom: Participants at Gujarat Vidyapith meet

GOPIO TRI-STATE NEW YORK GROUP MEETS WITH INDIAN CONSUL RIVA GANGULY DAS AND OTHER OFFICERS

GOPIO officers, chapter delegates and a selected group of GOPIO Life Members from the Tri-State New York area met India's new Consul General in New York Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das and other Consuls on March 30th at the Indian Consulate and had a fruitful interactive session on community issues and how the Indian American community can effectively be involved in India's development. In addition to Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das, other officials present from the Consulate at the meeting were Deputy Consul General Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Consul Sandeep Kumar (Passport and Visa), Vice Consul Sandeep Grover (OCI) and Passport Officers Devvrat Chakravarthy and Suman Bala.

Consul General Das welcomed the GOPIO delegation and said that GOPIO is an important organization to interact, since GOPIO reaches out to all sections of our community. Dr. Mohapatra explained on the current consular services provided by the Consulate and steps taken to improve and make it easier for the community.



Photo above: Consulate Officials and GOPIO Delegation at the Meeting

The meeting was organized by GOPIO's Tristate New York Coordinator Lal Motwani and was attended by the newly-elected International Coordinator for North America, Dr. Rajeev Mehta and delegates from GOPIO-New York, GOPIO-Upper New York, GOPIO-Connecticut and GOPIO-Central Jersey and many Life Members who have served in various capacities in the past. Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Founder President and Executive Trustee of GOPIO Foundation highlighted some of the community issues and many avenues where the community and the Consulate could cooperate for mutual benefits. These included the following:

Increased cooperation with the Consulate and Indian Community (Consulate celebrations of national events and festivals, consulate representation at Indian community meetings, participation in Consulate's lecture/seminar series, meetings with the Indian delegation, etc.); Utilizing community contacts with elected officials for promoting Indians' causes; Reaching out to next generation Indian Americans and involving them for India's causes; Issuance of Visa and Passport in emergencies; Improving consular services and shortening delays in OCI card issuance; Improving services by Cox and Kings and BLS International; Emergency help for Indian citizens in time of distress, death, etc.; Reaching out and interacting with the PIO communities in the New York area (large Indo-Caribbean community); and promoting India to the general American public.



GOPIO Founder President Dr. Thomas Abraham presenting a book Global Indian Disapora - 'GOPIO Making an Impact to Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das. From l. to r. Photo: GOPIO Central Jersey President Dinesh Mittal, GOPIO International Coordinator Rajeev Mehta, GOPIO Upper New York Secretary Patsy Leopold, Dr. Abraham, Ambassador Ganguly Das, GOPIO Tri-State Area coordinator Lal Motwani, GOPIO New York President Anand Ahuja and Dr. Parveen chopra

Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das reinforced the importance of the community reaching out to the elected officials and interacting with the new generations of Indian Americans. Dr. Mohapatra said that the passport services from BLS International will be taken over by Cox and Kings and he would make sure the transition is smooth. He also suggested that the community should write to helpline@indiacgny.org for any visa, passport and OCI issues.

For more information on GOPIO, contact Lal K. Motwani, GOPIO Coordinator for New York Tri-State Area. Tel: Tel: 516-581-3332, lmotwani@verizon.net.

GOPIO BERLIN PRESIDENT BARJINDER SODHI HELPS REFUGEES IN BERLIN

Europe is currently undergoing a massive influx of migrants trying to escape from the instability and conflicts between rival groups in their country. Germany has been at the receiving end of a large influx of these refugees. Congratulations and cheers to the Chapter President of GOPIO Berlin, Mr. Barjinder Sodhi and his wife who have done commendable work and set an example of courage and solidarity in helping these migrants. Sodhi organized food for these refugees from his restaurant, Neumann's in Berlin. This symbolizes the values that GOPIO sends to the whole world.

Please see the **YouTube Video** at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qm8>.

GOPIO - NORTH JERSEY IN THE OFFING

Congratulations to GOPIO Vice President Ram Gadhavi for taking the initiative of launching GOPIO-North Jersey in his area. GOPIO life members and others interested in GOPIO were invited to a meeting held at the Jyoti Indian Restaurant Banquet Hall in Wayne, New Jersey on Sunday, April 10th. Gadhavi welcomed everyone on behalf of GOPIO International.

GOPIO Founder President, Dr. Thomas Abraham provided an overview of GOPIO objectives and how GOPIO took up a major campaign for OCI cards, eliminating large penalties for passport surrender and a separate ministry for Overseas Indians. Dr Abraham further talked about GOPIO's mission and vision to serve the community as one voice for assisting and resolving complex issues and challenges by thinking globally and acting within local communities through local regional chapters.

Dr. Abraham further said that with the large Indian Diaspora population in New Jersey, GOPIO will have at least three chapters to serve the community, i.e. GOPIO Central Jersey (already in existence), GOPIO-North Jersey and GOPIO-South Jersey.

Passaic County Freeholder John W. Bartlett said that there is a sizable Indian community population in North Jersey and he welcomed the news of GOPIO starting its chapter in New Jersey.

Mr. Ashok Bhat, President of GOPIO Silicon Valley Chapter and provided some examples on how GOPIO assists in connecting political leaders across U.S and India to help start a dialogue on issues at hand.

Immigration attorney Michael Phulwani mentioned his involvement with GOPIO since its inception and also shared a few instances of immigration issues that he has been involved in to help the community. Phulwani also brought a major issue of Govt. of India not issuing/renewing passports for those Indian citizens in the U.S. who are no longer legal residents. A large number of Indian citizens are affected by this decision of the Indian government.

People assembled at the meeting unanimously decided to form chapter and elected the following persons as its office bearers.

President - Dhiraj Solanki

Vice President - Rajul Shah

Secretary - Abhi Adukia

Joint Secretary - Nitin Shukla

Treasurer - Gaurang Mehta

A letter of intent was prepared to send to GOPIO International. The chapter will be formally inaugurated on May 22nd at a luncheon meeting.



Photo above: GOPIO North Jersey Chapter officials with GOPIO International officers and other participants. Sitting from l. o r.: Gaurang Mehta (Treasurer), Abhi Adukhia (Secretary), GOPIO Intl. Coordinator for North America Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Dhiraj Solanki (President), GOPIO Intl. VP Ram Gadhavi, Rajul P. Shah (Vice President), GOPIO Founding President Dr. Thomas Abraham and Nitin Shukla (Jt. Secretary)

Contact: Dhiraj Solanki, Tel: 873-714-5249, E-mail: dnsolanki@hotmail.com

GOPIO-CONNECTICUT CONDUCTS ELECTION AND ORGANIZES TAX SEMINAR

GOPIO-CT conducted its annual election at its annual general body meeting in conjunction with its annual holiday party held at Hampton Inn and Suites in Stamford.

The following persons are elected for 2016.

Executive Officers

Shelly Nichani - President

Pradeep Govil - Exec. Vice President

Varghese Ninan - Vice President Bhavna Juneja - Secretary

Deepender Gupta - Jt. Secretary

Viresh Sharma - Treasurer

Shailesh Naik - Immediate Past President

Board Members

Meera Banta

Louella D'Silva

Ravi Dhingra

Ritu Johorey

Scholarship Committee

Sanjay Santhanam (Chair)

Hari Srinivasan

Tara Sharma

Priya Easwaran (Exec. Director)

Board of Trustees

Anita Bhat - Chair

Dr. Thomas Abraham - Secretary, Comptroller

Sangeeta Ahuja

Santosh Gannu

Joe Simon
Amarjit Singh
Shelly Nichani - Ex-Officio

In addition to many other celebrations around the year, GOPIO--CT organizes informative seminars and panel discussions on topics of interest to the larger Indian community three times in a year. Last month, the chapter organized seminar **2015/'16 US Tax Planning and Tax Saving Tips - International Tax Session, India-US Tax Issues, Financial Planning and Regulatory Issues Impacting Businesses**. The speakers were: **Cecil Nazareth** (Nazareth CAs & CPAs), **Shiva Bhashyam** (Certified Financial Planner) and **Steve Fusco** (Senior Consultant with Paychex). Sponsored by Paychex, the seminar was fully subscribed.



Photo: GOPIO-CT officials with seminar speakers: Photo top from l. to r.: Shailesh Naik, Sanjay Santhanam, Shelly Nichani, Meera Banta, Steve Fusco, Cecil Nazareth, Shiva Bhashyam, Deepender Gupta and Dr. Thomas Abraham; Photos bottom: Participants a the seminar

GOPIO-CT Youth meets at least once in a year and coordinate their own activities separately including GOPIO-CT sponsored soup kitchen for the homeless six times in a year. Early this year, the chapter's youth wing served at the soup kitchen at the New Covenant Soup Kitchen in Stamford and fed over 100 people for a special meal on February 27, 2016. GOPIO-CT youth coordinator Siyan Shaikh organized this event. Volunteers present were Avi Mukherjee, Bay Hodge, Siyan Shaikh, Junaid Shaikh and Louella D'Silva.



Photo: GOPIO-CT volunteers at the soup kitchen in Stamford. From l. to r. Bay Hodge, Siyan Shaikh, Junaid Shaikh and Avi Mukherjee