

73rd Independence Day Celebrations at High Commission of India in Seychelles

A flag hoisting ceremony to mark the 73rd Independence Day of India was held at the iconic Palais des Sports, Roche Caiman Sports Complex (Indoor Stadium), Victoria at 9:00 AM August 15, 2019 in the presence of about 400 Seychelles-based NRIs and PIOs. High Commission of India to Seychelles Gen. Dalbir Singh Suhag (Retd.) gave his address on the occasion following which the President's address to the nation was read out by the Head of Chancery Shri Ashwin Bhaskaran. This was followed by singing of patriotic songs by the High Commission Ladies Choir and a variety of cultural programs by children from the Indian diaspora. Light refreshment was also served on the occasion.

In the evening, the High Commissioner hosted the National Day Reception at the Kempinski Hotel Resort, Baie Lazare where several local dignitaries, government officials and members of diplomatic missions were present. The Chief Guest at the function was **Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Vincent Meriton**. Other dignitaries that attended the event included **Hon'ble Nicholas Prea, Speaker of the National Assembly; Mr. Charles De Comarmond, Leader of Government Business; Hon'ble Wavel Ramkalawan, Leader of Opposition; Minister of Home Affairs, Local Government, Youth, Sports, Culture, and Risk & Disaster Management (Designated Minister) Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon; Minister of Finance, Trade, Investment & Economic Planning, Mr. Maurice Loustau-Lalanne; Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports & Marine, Mr. Didier Dogley; Minister of Fisheries & Agriculture, Mr. Charles Bastienne**; Heads of Diplomatic Missions, top government functionaries including the Attorney General, Auditor General and Chairman of Electoral Commission.

After the national anthems of both India and Seychelles, speeches were delivered by the High Commissioner and the Chief Guest. The High Commissioner spoke about India's growing stature in the world, its vibrant democracy and strong economy. He laid out our Prime Minister's vision for India in Indian and Pacific Ocean region and the strong relationship India has with the countries in Africa. He stated the strong bilateral ties shared between India and Seychelles and the role played by India in fulfilling the

developmental, training, capacity building and defense and security requirements of Seychelles. He also spoke about the Indian diaspora in Seychelles and their role in development of Seychelles.

On his part, H.E. Mr. Vincent Meriton, Vice President thanked India for the various projects that India is carrying out on grant basis and mentioned the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals. He reiterated Seychelles support for India and spoke at length about the historic ties between India and Seychelles. At the end he raised a toast to the good relations between India and Seychelles.

A special Independence Day cake was cut by H.E. Mr. Vincent Meriton, Vice President and Gen. Dalbir Singh Suhag, High Commissioner of India. The formal function was followed by a cultural program and a dinner. About 300 guests attended the evening function.

Both the events were given wide coverage by the local print and television media. Local broadcaster Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation broadcast both the events on their channel SBC1 and newspapers Nation and Today published articles on the same. Earlier, a special Indian Independence Day supplement was brought out by both the newspapers on August 14 (August 15 was a local holiday so no newspapers came out). The special supplement contained Message by the High Commissioner and various articles on India. Various advertisements were published by local businesses on Indian origin congratulating on the 73rd Independence Day.

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