**India as the ‘Guest of Honour’ country at the Havana International Book Fair**

India participated as the ‘Guest of Honour’ country at the Havana International Book Fair (24th edition) that formally opened on 12th February, 2015. The Fair was scheduled in Havana till 22nd February and, thereafter, it travelled across major Cuban cities till April. Secretary, Department of Culture, Shri Ravindra Singh represented India at the ceremonies.

At a colourful ceremony organized in the morning of 12th February at the Havana Fort (which is a UNESCO World Heritage monument), the flags of Cuba and India were hoisted, followed by the Cuban military band playing the two national anthems to perfect score. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador thanked the Cuban Government for according the special honour on India inviting it to be the first Asian nation to be the Guest of Honour country at the Fair.

The Fair was formally inaugurated at a ceremony organized on 12th Evening, also at the Havana Fort. The event was graced by the First Vice-President, Miguel Diaz Canel, President of the Cuban People’s Assembly, Esteban Lazo Hernandez, Culture Minister, Mr. Julian Gonzalez and several other dignitaries and the Diplomatic corps. President of the Book Institute (that corresponds to our NBT and Sahitya Akademi), Ms. Zuleica Romay explained the rationale behind India as the Guest of Honour country this year and paid glowing tributes to Indian literary and cultural heritage and warmly welcomed the Indian delegation. Secretary, Department of Culture, Shri Ravindra Singh, recalled the traditionally warm ties between Cuba and India, highlighting the special place Cuba enjoys in India. He thanked Cuba for making India the Guest of Honour country this year and elaborated the Indian participation in both books and cultural presentation sections, hoping that these would further promote mutual understanding and bring the two peoples closer.

4. The India Pavillion was formally opened on 13th February by the Secretary (Culture). The Pavillion comprised three large halls including the one named ‘Tagore Hall’ devoted for daily presentations of Yoga and discussions on Indian books, ranging from Ramayana to Gita to the eminent personalities of India. The inaugural ceremony was followed by a presentation of the Incredible India, highlighting the various attractions.

The Indian participation panned out well. Presentations ranged from Rajasthani folk dance, live demonstrations by four master craftsmen, yoga festival with two Indian yoga masters, Indian film festival and an Indian bazaar, bringing along Indian souvenirs and handicrafts and food festival. The Fair received extensive media coverage.

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