

The 12th Annual Gala of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston “TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD” was held on Saturday, November 12, 2011, at The Legends Ballroom at the Intercontinental Hotel in Houston.

Recognizing the commonality of interest in the Healthcare sector in the United States and India, with the goal of understanding the business of medicine and its future direction, the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) launched the Healthcare Initiative for the year 2011. Dr. Devinder Bhatia, a distinguished thoracic surgeon in Houston, and his wife Gina Bhatia were the IACCGH Gala Chairs for 2011.

At the pre-gala reception hosted by Wells Fargo & Wells Fargo Advisors, after brief remarks by Congressman Al Green, Dr. & Mrs. Bhatia presenting plaques to some of the Gala underwriters, including United Airlines, Houston Business Journal, Wells Fargo Advisors, and Wells Fargo. The City of Sugar Land Council Member Jacquie Chaumette, Fort Bend ISD President, Sonal Bhuchar, Darshan Rauniyar, candidate for U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, 1st Congressional District and Stafford resident K. P. George, candidate for the 22nd U.S. Congressional District had an opportunity to meet the IACCGH Executive Leaders, the Board of Directors, the Membership of IACCGH, various business Executives from Shell, Prudential, Jackson & Walker LLP, BMC, IBM, Citi, and other IACCGH Corporate Supporters.

Almost 550 individuals from the Greater Houston Business Community and several Indo-American Business Leaders, including Vijay Goradia, Paul Likhari, Moez Mangalji and many eminent local Indo-Americans including Dr. Latha Ramchand (C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston), Dr. Mohan Kuruvilla (Dean, School of Business, Houston Baptist University) and Dr. Lopa Mishra (MDACC) attended the event to welcome the Gala Chief Guest, Her Excellency Nirumapma Rao, Ambassador of India to the United States. Also attending the event were Mr. Sudhakar Rao, IAS (Retired), former Chief Secretary Government of Karnataka, India, who has also previously served as Minister of Commerce at the Indian Embassy in Washington D.C. in 1999, Honorable Consul General Sanjiv Arora, Consulate General of India Houston, and Mrs. Chayya Arora.

Regional Emmy Award Winner Sonia Azad, Channel 13, the Gala Emcee began the evening by providing a quick glimpse into the history of the Chamber, a non-profit organization which was formed in 1999 with the support of the Indian Consulate and several Business and Community Leaders. She acknowledged that over the years, IACCGH has succeeded in well serving the changing needs of the business community. Ms. Azad brought to everyone’s attention the IACCGH Annual Gala Magazine which serves as a report on the recent activities of the IACCGH, the cover of which simply revealed, Integrating: Industries, Institutions, Ideas, Innovation and Individuals. The commemorative souvenir contained messages and proclamations from Senator John Cornyn, and many distinguished and notable individuals including the Mayor of Houston Annise Parker, Mayor of Sugar Land Jimmy Thompson, Congressman Ted Poe, Congressman Pete Olson, and many others.

With an elegant platinum and a rich blue decor, with iridescent blue lights beaming from the floor and enveloping the ballroom, streaks of blue vividly reflecting through the hydrangea centerpieces, every table hosted business leaders and executives from diverse industrial sectors. Also, in attendance at the Gala were several elected officials including, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia, City of Houston Council Members Al Hong, Brenda Stardig, and Stephen Costello, City of Sugar Land Council Members Thomas Abraham

and Harish Jajoo, Fort Bend ISD Trustee Sonal Bhuchar. Matthew Shaler represented City of Houston Mayor Annise Parker.

In his Opening Remarks, Mr. Jagdip Ahluwalia, the founding Secretary of IACCGH who also serves as the IACCGH Executive Director, often endearingly referred to as the cornerstone of this organization by the Executive Team, applauded the support of the Gala Chairs Dr. Devinder & Gina Bhatia, the Indian Consulate, the Gala Host Committee Members and the major 2011 Platinum and Gold supporters. Mr. Ahluwalia welcomed the delegates from sister Chambers in Dallas (Sanjeev Khanna and Sunil Maini) and Alabama (Anil Agrawal).

Thereafter, Ms. S. Mona Parikh, the President of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston thanked the attendees for providing her an opportunity to represent all those believe in the incredibly important Partnership between the United States of America and India, and also those who believe in sustaining the Greater Houston Region as a metropolis of international significance. Ms. Parikh noted that nearly three million Indo-Americans who now call this country their home(out of which over 100,000 reside within the Greater Houston area) provide a powerful connection between the free market democracies of the United States and India and that bilateral trade between the two countries has more than tripled in the last decade and likewise, trade between Houston and India continues to be on the rise. Ms. Parikh explained that perceiving the extraordinary promise and potential in the ever transforming and intensifying relationship and co-operation between the United States of America and India, a relationship which aims to advance common ideals of democracy and enhanced economic engagement, while at the same time, recognizing the growing public and private collaborations world-wide, and most importantly, based upon a strong belief in the spirit of optimism, dedication and determination of the people of these two great Nations, she shared a vision: “United States of America and India AND Unitedly, U & I - shall Transform Our World.” As she thanked her entire team for working together to enable furthering the Mission of the Chamber, she reassured the audience that “Strengthening the evolving relationship between the United States of America and India, is our goal; Promoting business with the Greater Houston region is our commitment; and Members, enabling you to succeed remains our pledge.”

The remarks by Hon. Consul General Sanjiv Arora, emphasized the close working relationship between the IACCGH and the Consulate. Sharing some vital statistics which evidence the tremendous ongoing growth in the bilateral trade between India and the United States, he congratulated the IACCGH President and the team for the ongoing efforts to promote business opportunities and also acknowledged that the IACCGH has been willing to assist and share best practices with others, which has aided in the establishment of other Indo-American Chambers in other States under the jurisdiction of the Consulate General of India Houston.

Upon thanking Mona Parikh and Jagdip Ahluwalia and the IACCGH Members for the opportunity to chair the event, with a sense of pride, Dr. Devinder Bhatia gave a quick glimpse into his own personal journey, with a father of Indian origin and an American mother, reflecting the essence of “Indo-American.” The Gala Chairs, Dr. Devinder & Gina Bhatia then introduced the Chief Guest Her Excellency Nirupama Rao, Ambassador of India to the United States. In her comprehensive but succinct message to the audience, Ambassador Rao shared her thoughts on India “the salience of its wide ranging growth, and opportunities and potential that it opens up for expanding India-US trade and economic relations.” As Ambassador Rao reflected on the current uncertain global environment which is full of challenges, one where the pace of economic recovery world over is uneven, the Euro debt crisis remain unresolved, and a world in which the inflationary pressures and stress on currencies world-wide is further slowing down the world GDP

growth, She reminded the audience that “it is in this backdrop that we should view India’s dynamic economy, its growth paradigm and its rapidly growing externalities including a rich agenda of bilateral cooperation with the United States,” and that over the past two decades, India has been the second fastest growing major economy in the world. She further expressed that the growth in the Indian economy provides potentially a large market for the US products, technologies and services. She noted that India has emerged not only as one of the key drivers of global growth but also of its stability and that the signing of the India-US civil nuclear agreement signaled a new thinking in the US-India bilateral ties, a willingness to address complex issues with clarity and maturity. Ambassador Rao particularly stated with pride that India and the United States are now both partners in each other’s growth and prosperity. The substantive agenda for bilateral engagement includes: Strengthening partnership in Global Security; Deepening the linkages in fields of technology, innovation and energy; Forging greater links to encourage research and innovation leading to job, wealth and value creation in both economies; Jointly developing, testing and replicating transformative technologies to extend food security as part of an Evergreen Revolution; Working to achieve stronger investment flows in India’s infrastructure sector, clean energy, aviation and transportation, health care, food processing and education; and, Expanding and deepening the bilateral trade and business-to-business links including through greater engagement between Indian and American small and medium sized enterprises. Recalling her last tour of duty in the United States in early 90s to her current responsibilities as Ambassador, she noted that “... it has been a story of change. Change in the Indian economy; change in the whole space of our (US-India) bilateral ties; and change in the global environment in which our relationship has matured. Today, more than ever before, in the US, as in India, there is a clear recognition and much excitement in moving India-US relationship to a new level of higher engagement befitting of our strategic partnership.”

The evening continued with the announcement and presentation of the “TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD - 2011 EXCELLENCE AWARDS,” the objective of which is to recognize the efforts of individuals who have made a substantial impact upon a business sector which in turn has resulted in a transformation - either conceptual, economic, or through policy implementation. The members of the Awards Selection Committee included Richard A. Huebner, President, Houston Minority Supplier Development Council, IACCGH Advisor, Paul Hamilton and IACCGH Past President and Director Emeritus, Brij Kathuria. Mr. Kathuria who has served the Chamber for over eight years, provided a detailed description of the process which was undertaken by the 3 panel judging team to arrive at the final selection and the pre-established criteria which included the following salient points: Innovative Concept; Demonstration of Success within the Company; Economic Growth within Greater Houston and/or Trade between US & India, Involvement with the Chamber, Recognition in the Greater Houston Community of the individual as one with high integrity and values, ability of the Individual to provide inspiration to others, and the individual’s involvement in Philanthropic causes.

Mr. Swatantra Jain, Vinmar International Ltd., and Mr. Avinash Ahuja, Magnum Producing Company received the 2011 Excellence Awards for Community Leadership. The winners of the 2011 Excellence Awards for Business accomplishments were: Mr. Hemant Goradia, President & CEO, Vinmar International Ltd.; Mr. Jugal Malani, Founder, Chairman & President, Unique Industrial; Mr. Bob Beauchamp, Chairman of the Board & CEO, BMC Software; Mr. Govind Agrawal, President & CEO, GRA Enterprise LP; Mr. Brij Agrawal, President & CEO, VKC Group; Mr. Dilip Bhargava, Founder, Chairman, & President, SDB Steel

and Pipe; Mr. Samuel & Omana Abrahams, Owners - Abrahams Oriental Rugs; and Mr. Pershant & Mrs. Nidhika Mehta, Founder and President & CEO, Je Matadi Inc.

Interspersed throughout the evening was spectacular entertainment, presented by J & D Entertainment LLC, who presented International Cirque star Cristin Sandu and the world Champion Hula Hoop Artist, Nicole Myint. Each performance which was a feat, captivated the audience. From juggling the galvanized 8x8 cube to the *rola bola* act by Artist Sandu, an act which has been previously featured on America's Got Talent, displayed the power of one individual and reflected the reality of the business world, i.e., in a volatile global economy, counteracting with a sense of balance and equilibrium is undoubtedly essential. Similarly, the spellbinding moves by contortionist Myint, clearly conveyed the Chamber message: The capability of even one human being is virtually limitless and that in an ever changing world, the ability to improvise and adapt is vital. Each act brought down the house!

Upon briefly recognizing the key representatives of the IACCGH in attendance, including the Board of Directors [Madhukar Prasad (Immediate Past President), Ajit Thakur (Incoming President), Ashok Garg (Treasurer), Sanjay Ramabhadran (Secretary), Dr. Subodh Bhuchar, Aku Patel, Harish Kathrani, Joya Shukla, Nitin Kapadia), Director at Large Pankaj Dhume, and Directors Emeritus, Dr. Atul Varadhachary, Brij Kathuria, Deepa Thakur] the IACCGH team invited the retiring IACCGH Office Administrator, Ms. Mondira Tangri, on stage and honored her for her long term service to the Chamber. Incoming IACCGH Board members Allen Richards, Swapan Dhairyawan, Pankaj Dhume and Amod Bavare were also introduced. IACCGH Board Members, Dr. Subodh Bhuchar and Sanjay Ramabhadran brought the auction to life, raising additional funds which will enable the Chamber to deliver networking and focused business developmental programs. Mr. Ajit Thakur, Incoming President IACCGH, shared his vision for 2011 which includes building upon the success of the Chamber further by relying on the concept of "*i Chamber - e Chamber.*" He stated that every member of the business community will have an interactive relationship with the Chamber and the Chamber will in all earnest better disperse a wide variety of information to assist the Chamber membership through the web which will result in business and professional growth.

As the final performance once again enamored the audience, on behalf of the Chamber, Mr. Jagdip Ahluwalia expressed his sincere appreciation to all the attendees, members and supporters.

[Dr. Bhatia is a distinguished thoracic surgeon in Houston and holds certification from the American Board of Thoracic and General Surgery. He and his wife Gina are strong supporters of various causes including March of Dimes, San Jose Clinic, Family Services of Greater Houston, Children's Museum of Houston, Make a Wish Foundation, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Symphony, Houston Ballet, Chron's Colitis Foundation, Indian Film Festival, Houston Museum of Health, Hermann Park Conservancy and Communities in Schools.

Ms. S. Mona Parikh is a Partner with the Law Offices of Jones, Mays, Ramsey & Parikh. Her areas of practice include, Estate Planning, Probate and Real Estate Law. She is active in the Indo-American Community and is the legal counsel for various Indo-American nonprofit organizations. She is a Board Member of Pratham Houston and has served her full term as a Board Member of the Houston Business Development, Inc., established by the City of Houston, to stimulate economic growth, support the expansion of small businesses, and combat community deterioration.