

# India Herald

VOL. 15 NO. 41 • WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2009 • P.O. BOX 623 • SUGAR LAND, TX 77487 • PERIODICAL PERMIT USPS 017-699 25 C

## IA Chamber celebrates 'The Power of Ten'



At "The Power of Ten" gala on Oct. 10 Jagdip Ahluwalia, LEFT, IACCGH executive director, Mona Parikh, secretary, Brij Kathuria, outgoing president, Dr Renu Khator, Pioneer Award honoree, Gwen Emmett and Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. Other honorees (standing from left) Rajeev Gadgil, Roger Israni, Ramesh Bhutada, Gopal Savjani and Vijay Goradia. Honorees not in the picture - Meena Datt, Tom Abraham, Chitra Divakaruni and Sushma Grover.

### HOUSTON

The IndoAmerican Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston celebrated its tenth anniversary with a gala night and banquet and acknowledged the pioneering work of ten Houstonians.

The sold-out event at the Hilton Hotel on Saturday, Oct. 10, was attended by nearly 500 people, including many lawmakers in city, state and federal governments.

Since its beginning in 1999, the chamber has strived to live up to its mission of building on India-U.S. ties, encouraging U.S. businesses to invest in India, helping trade delegations from India with information and logistical ground support.

The chamber has built strong relationships with major Houston corporations like BMS Software, Continental Airlines, Reliant Energy and Shell.

"We have made substantial strides in facilitating commerce between the United States and India," said Brij Kathuria, outgoing president.

"The chamber has directly influenced major airlines, resulting in the expansion of flights between the U.S. and India."

Kathuria spoke of the chamber's involvement with the local non-tech Indian businesses along Hillcroft by holding educational and informative seminars and legal clinics for small businesses.

Stressing the chamber's strong commitment to educa-

tion, Kathuria informed the gathering that at its upcoming golf tournament, the chamber has partnered with Pratham to raise money for the schooling of poor children in India.

Jagdip Ahluwalia, executive director of the IACCGH, welcomed the gathering and spoke of the chamber's journey over the years during which it had received strong and committed backing the Indian Consulate and successive consul-generals.

Madhukar Prasad, the incoming president, also spoke. He said the chamber's new initiatives will include a series of sessions on leadership and business developmental needs of women leaders and CEO forums for small and medium businesses to help networking and mutual learning.

"Let us speak of the power of two - the U.S. and India," said U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and a roar of approval went up. "So many courageous businessmen said Houston and India can do business," and embarked upon the chamber. The India-U.S.-India civil nuclear deal has not been an easy one, she said, but it was achieved through robust and dedicated work of organizations like the chamber. Jackson Lee presented a U.S. Congressional proclamation to Kathuria hailing the role of IACCGH.

"India-U.S. ties are in good hands," said Consul-general Sanjiv Arora, pointing to the U.S. lawmakers — U. S. Rep-

resentatives Pete Olson and Sheila Jackson Lee and Sen. John Cornyn (his representative attended the program). He also called President Barack Obama's first state dinner next month with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as a firm indication of where the U.S. wants to take its ties with India.

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett; Dr. John Mendelsohn, president, The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center; Jason Few, president of Reliant Energy and senior vice president, retail, NRG; and Dr. Renu Khator, chancellor and president, University of Houston System.

The evening's entertainment was provided by Anjali Center for Performing Arts, J and D Entertainment which presented a magic show (Jagdip Ahluwalia made a dramatic entry — emerge from a large box which was empty just seconds earlier). The dinner was catered by Daawat / Madras Pavilion.

The honorees of "The Power of Ten Pioneer Award" were:

**THOMAS ABRAHAM:** For being a pioneer in integrating the Indo American community in the local civic democratic process. Thomas Abraham was the first Indo American to get elected to a public office in greater Houston area. Abraham was elected to Sugar Land Council in 2004 and was recently elected President of Texas Municipal League Region 14, San Jacinto



CHAMBER HONOREES. Chitra Divakaruni, left, Vijay Goradia and Meena Datt. — Photos by BIJAY DIXIT

Region-Houston Area.

**RAMESH BHUTADA:** 25 years ago when it was not an easy time to do business with India in the US, Ramesh Bhutada had the vision to start importing industrial castings from India. Over the years he has built a successful business. Now there are many highly successful businesses founded by Indo Americans in this field, but Bhutada was one of the pioneers.

**MEENA DATT:** A household name in Indo American community in the greater Houston area. Datt is a pioneer in getting Indian music on the air. Now there are scores of radio and TV stations devoted to Indian movies, news and music but Meena was on the air more than 20 years ago. Her shows, Music of India and The Asian Hour - Ghungroo are very popular every weekend.

**CHITRA DIVAKARUNI:** An award-winning author and poet; her themes include women, immigration, the South Asian experience, history, myth, magic and celebrating diversity. She writes both for adults and children. Her books have been translated into 20 languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Russian and Japanese. Two novels, The Mistress of Spices and Sister of My Heart, have been made into films. Her short stories, Arranged Marriage, won an American Book Award. She teaches Creative Writing at the University of Houston.

**RAJEEV GADGIL:** One of the pioneering professional journalists in our community, Gadgil has been a journalist for over quarter of a century. First with The Times of India in Mumbai then with Indo American News in Houston now as owner of India Herald.

**VIJAY GORADIA:** Vijay Goradia founded one the first Chemical trading companies by an Indo American in Houston area and made it one of the most successful ones, but that accomplishment fades in com-

parison to his contribution to humanity by his founding chairman of Pratham USA. With Pratham USA's help, Pratham as an organization is now providing preschool and remedial education to over 300,000 poor children all over India.

**SUSHMA (Suzanne) DUGGAL GROVER:** For her pioneering work in introducing Indian jewelry to American women. Since 1974, Duggal Grover has been in the jewelry business, bringing magical craftsmanship of Indian gem cutters and jewelry makers.

**HAKU & ROGER ISRANI:** The first Indo American owned test preparation service for SAT, GRE, GMAT etc. Traditional business men would have walked away from this business, thinking that Kaplan had all but locked up the market. Testmasters is now viewed by many as the best standardized test preparation service in Houston.

**Dr. RENU KHATOR:** Talk of breaking the glass ceiling. American institutions of higher learning are filled with outstanding teachers and scientists of Indian origin but there are very few who have been able to break the glass ceiling of becoming the top administrator of a major University. Khator is the first Indo American woman to head a major university.

**GOPAL SAVJANI:** A Chemical Engineer who has specialized in the field of Biomedical Diagnostics since 1972: A contributing leader in hormone analysis, especially focusing on women's health-care, Down's Syndrome, Pediatrics and Cardiac care.

Currently his focus is to develop as an investment firm specializing in Bio and Nano Technology advances within the US and overseas. A constant giver who contributes to 20+ philanthropic organizations and public causes. Not too long ago, he also initiated participation in the Scholarship program to the students at the university of Houston Downtown