

IACCGH 15th Annual Gala | September 27, 2014



INDO-AMERICAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF GREATER HOUSTON

“This past weekend, I had the honor of speaking to the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston and discussing why the case for closer U.S. relations with India is overwhelming. India has a remarkably young population and a rising middle class, and the growth of its consumer market will create massive new opportunities for U.S. exporters in the decades ahead.”

– US Senator John Cornyn in an Op-Ed on “The Hill” – Sept. 30, 2014



HOUSTON: The Indo American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston's (IACCGH) biggest event of the year, the Fifteenth Anniversary Gala, took place at the Hilton Americas on September 27th. The evening saw local business leaders and high ranking professionals networking at the Reception prior to the main event. Several elected officials were also present at the 600 strong gathering. At the Reception, Dr. John Mendelsohn, Past President of the MD Anderson Cancer Center presented plaques of appreciation to the major sponsors of the evening. Sheriff Adrian Garcia took the opportunity to greet the gathering with a traditional *Namaste* and appreciated the work carried out by the Chamber. Setting the tone for the evening was the energetic *dhol* player who led the guests into the ballroom where Chloe Choudhury vowed the audience with her rendition of the Star Spangled Banner as well as the Indian national anthem. Raashi Vats of Fox TV was the EMCEE. Dubbed by Senator John Cornyn as "the glue" that holds the Chamber together and by IACCGH President Sanjay Ramabhadran as the name that is "synonymous" with the Chamber, Executive Director Jagdip Ahluwalia welcomed the gathering. He reflected that the Chamber had created a strong relationship with local economic

agencies over the past 15 years which “continues to this day.” He expressed his pride at the Chamber’s achievements in the energy and education sector as well as the “job creation that’s happening.” He encouraged everyone to go through the Gala magazine to get a full picture of the Chamber’s history, work and accomplishments over the past 15 years.

IACCGH President, Sanjay Ramabhadran profiled IACCGH’s mission and asserted that the Chamber has over the years “Built bridges for business here in the Greater Houston region and with India” According to him, this was due to the zeal of its Past Presidents, Board Members and Advisors who helped propel the organization along the right path. IACCGH has set the stage for multiple trade delegations to India in the coming months. Previous trade missions have resulted in the opening of the Mahindra facility in Harris County and while Trade Missions may “take time to fruition” they reinforce the Chamber’s efforts to create local jobs. President Ramabhadran remarked that the Chamber’s networking events reflect diversity of business opportunities and people and if “properly tapped” will pay huge dividends.” In short, IACCGH’s efforts have made “a direct impact on the Houston economy” and delivered tangible results over the last 15 years. A congratulatory video message from India’s Consul General P. Harish in Houston and Mayor Annise Parker was played.

Senior US Senator for Texas and Keynote Speaker at the Gala, Senator John Cornyn warmly congratulated the Chamber for helping strengthen the critically important US India partnership. He noted that in the last two decades, organizations like the IACCGH have played an important role in deepening and strengthening cooperation between the two great democracies. He also referred to the milestone achieved by India last week in joining the exclusive club of countries to orbit Mars and saw opportunities for collaboration with NASA’s space mission in Houston.

Referring to India and the US as natural allies, he believed that this kind of ideological bond between the two nations translates into a powerful partnership on the world stage. India represents a massive opportunity for the US which is why the idea of forming an India Caucus came to him appropriately enough at the Taj Mahal. Founded in 2004, India is the only single country Caucus and it is a great recognition of the strategic alliance between the two nations. There is little doubt that the two nations have made great progress together with trade having grown by 500% since 2000.

However there are several priorities that the US needs to focus on – the primary one being the export of LNG to India. Under the current laws, US companies need to seek federal approval to export LNG. Senator Cornyn pushed for legislation to accelerate this process and believed that this will be good for the US, good for our partnership and good for our mutual strategic interests. He also referred to the growing threat of terrorism and stated that the US cannot afford to neglect India, its strategic partner and closest friend in that region and the two countries need each other to tackle the threat of terrorism.

Referring to PM Narendra Modi's visit to the US as a historic opportunity to make our partnership stronger, he regretted the fact that due to the timing of the session, the US could not host PM Modi at the joint session of the Congress but will surely do so in the future

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Photos by Bijay Dixit

[2014 Gallery from <https://www.iaccgh.com/gala/>]