

Indo American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston held its 18th Annual Gala on September 30th, 2017, at Hilton Americas Downtown. The event coincided with the 4th Annual US-India Partnership day. The chamber has been recognizing this partnership since 1999 when India was yet to become the flavor of the future. The theme for this year's Gala was "Partners in Progress", which was coined before the havoc caused by Hurricane Harvey, yet very apt to depict how community partnerships have worked in the relief and recovery operations.

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, Judge Ed Emmett presented plaques of appreciation to the major sponsors of the evening. The main event commenced with national anthems of both countries. Sanjay Ramabhadran, a chamber Board member was the Master of Ceremony. Chamber's Executive Director, Jagdip Ahluwalia highlighted this year's economic development through bilateral ties. This included India's purchase of over \$2 billion US Crude oil, within one month of PM Modi's meeting with President Trump. IACCGH was present at the loading of the crude oil on the first ship that sailed out of Texas. Another win for Texas was the sale of Apache helicopters to India.

The new board was introduced next, led by President-Elect Swapan Dhairyawan. A video depicting the history of the chamber helped the audience appreciate this amazing journey. They were encouraged to go through the Gala magazine to get a full picture of the Chamber's history, work, and accomplishments over the 18 years.

The chief guest of the evening, India's Consul General Dr. Anupam Ray gave a wonderful speech, touching upon India's ever-growing influence on the global stage. The Indian community has given time, talent, and treasure towards relief efforts. Post Harvey, IACF

(Indo-American Charity Foundation) set up a fund to support the Harvey relief efforts. This initiative endorsed by the Consul General and proposed by Sapphira Goradia, President of the Goradia Family Foundation, includes contributions from the Chambers individual members, businesses large & small, and those from India that have a presence in Houston and the community at large. The community responded positively with many chamber members like GAIL USA, Charles Foster, Dilip Bhargava, and local places of worship sending in tens of thousands of dollars to the fund. Major Philanthropists like Dr. Durga Agrawal donated through India House. IACF President Dr. Vanitha Pothuri donated \$25000 bringing IACF's total up to \$100,000. Sapphira Goradia matched this first \$100,000 donated. WIPRO donated \$250,000 to the governor's fund, BioUrja donated \$250000 to the Mayor's fund and Mahindra Americas donated a total of \$1.5 Million in cash and kind to the relief efforts. IACCGH Past Presidents Ashok Garg and Sanjay Ramabhadran and President Allen Richards felt that the IACCGH Gala would be a great venue to showcase the community's effort in giving back. A symbolic check from the Indian American Community "Marching Towards a Million" acknowledging and celebrating the contributions that have already been made to these funds was presented to Harris County Judge Emmett and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner by Consul General Dr. Ray, Sapphira Goradia, Jagdip Ahluwalia, Allen Richards, Amit Bhandari of BioUrja, Harish Shanbhag of Wipro and Mani Iyer of Mahindra USA. Mention was also made of the volunteer hours made by SEWA International, The Hindus of Greater Houston, the Bohra Community, the Sikh National Center several other Indo American Churches, temples, and mosques. Judge Emmett and Mayor Turner congratulated the chamber on the efforts to support the Houston community. IACCGH current President Allen Richards described the 18th year of the Chamber as the start of "a new direction". He highlighted the collaboration with other ethnically diverse organizations and the

“NexGen” initiative, providing opportunities to the younger demographic. The Gala also had amazing entertainment provided by singers Skylar Beamon, Sparsh Shah, and a flash mob.

Bob Patel, CEO, and Chairman of Lyondell Basell delivered the keynote. His keynote started off with his inspirational life story. He appreciated the work the Chamber is doing in creating connections, bringing the two countries closer together, and advancing knowledge to create opportunity.

IACCGH also recognized the professional and public service achievements of members of the Indo-American community. Port Houston Chairman Janiece Longoria received the award for the tremendous impact on the economy, Dr. Marie Goradia received the “Impact on Humanity” award for her efforts through Pratham USA; Bal Sareen, CEO of Brask Inc. received the “Entrepreneur of the Year” award and Swapnil Agarwal of Karya Management received the “Young Entrepreneur of the Year” award. The event coordinators were also felicitated.

President-Elect, Swapan Dhairyawan, delivered the vote of thanks and outlined his plans for the coming year. The event concluded with declaring the winner of the prestigious Rolex Raffle and a wonderful Indian dinner by Dawat Catering (Madras Pavilion).