

Panorama India Celebrates Indian R-Day In Style

Several MPs, MPPs, Brampton & Mississauga Mayors Attend Event; Cultural Performances Regale Audience

TORONTO: Panorama India celebrated the 70th India Republic Day on Sunday, February 10, at the Pearson Convention Center, Brampton. The event united the local Indian community through celebrating the diversity of Indo-Canadians in Canada.

Overwhelming support for the event was garnered by community leaders, political dignitaries and sponsors, all of whom came together to celebrate India's 70th Republic Day.

Attendees included the Consul General of India in Toronto, Dinesh Bhatia, Federal Minister of Science, Kirsty Duncan, MP Ruby Sahota, MP Ramesh Sangha, MP Bob Soraya, MPP Nina Tangri, MPP Deepak Anand, MPP Amarjot Sidhu, Mayor of Mississauga Bonnie Crombie and Mayor of Brampton Patrick Brown.

The program showcased 20 community organizations of which 200 local performers were given the Panorama India Platform. These groups displayed talent in all forms of artistic expression such as dancing, singing and drawing.

Opening ceremony commenced at 12pm with Republic Day greetings and messages from dignitaries. Panorama India Chair, Anu Srivastava welcomed everyone and recognized the political dignitaries, community leaders, and guests. She said "Unity in Diversity and building Indo Canada bi-lateral relations through culture is the prime objective of this celebration."

Consul General of India Mr. Dinesh Bhatia addressed the crowd and brought the Republic Day greetings on behalf of the President of India. He emphasized his appreciation for the Indian Diaspora in Toronto and gave a recap of the past three years in Toronto.

Dr. Kristy Duncan, Federal Minister of Science, began with a greeting to all in Hindi. She talked about family values that are reflected in the Indo-Canadian community here in Canada.

MPP Nina Tangri brought greetings from Premier Doug Ford and was joined on stage by MPP Deepak Anand and MPP Amarjot Sidhu.

Mayor Patrick Brown of



Consul General Dinesh Bhatia with the Panorama Board of Directors.



Anu Srivastava & Mayor Patrick Brown



Dr. Kirsty Duncan, Anu Srivastava and MP Ruby Sahota

Brampton reiterated his enthusiasm and support for India stating that he had visited India eighteen times and is amazed with the cultural diversity of the country.

Mayor Bonnie Crombie of Mississauga also spoke.

Ramesh Chotai was felicitated at the official opening ceremony by Chair Anu Srivastava and Consul General of India Dinesh Bhatia for receiving the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award by President of India Ram Nath Kovind at the PBD held in Varanasi in January.

Panorama India celebrations highlight the diversity of India through many dance and musical performances which included folk dance competition, drawing competition for children, food court and Vendor Bazaar with a variety of clothes, food, and jewelry booths.

Folk-Dance Competition was judged by Parth Dani, Vaishali Panwar and Puja Amin. Fourteen cultural organisations representing the various States of India participated with gusto.

Neerja Trehan announced the winners of the Children's Draw-

ing Competition. The competition had an overwhelming response this year with over 100 entries this year from children between the ages of 7-16 years old.

The extremely popular Panorama India Idol contest received a tremendous representation from local artists during its preliminary selection rounds on January 20th, 2019.

Panorama India Idol Contest was judged by a panel of eminent personalities Seema Bhatia, Rajendra Dixit and Manoj Chaman.

SBI Canada Bank sponsored the Indian Idol contest and the finalists were chosen that day by an eager audience who casted their vote for their favourite singer. The Junior Idol contest was won by Unnati Shah and Ravneel Singh was declared the winner in the Adult category. Prize for Adult winner is trip to India by the Consulate General of India.

Vice Chair, Sumeeta Kohli wrapped up the evening and made special acknowledgments to SBI Canada Bank, Paystation Inc., Galway Foundation, CIBC, Roop Mahal Jewellers and Media Partner ATN, Y Media, Vendors,



Cultural & Community Organizations, Participants and Volunteers.

Panorama Chair, Anu Srivastava concluded the event by thanking all attendees and stakeholders in making the event

successful with 5,000+ people during the day by the Indian Diaspora in the GTA.

Panorama India will be hosting the India Day Festival & Grand Parade at Nathan Phillips Square on August 18th, 2019.

Students Knew They Were Committing 'Visa Crime': US

WASHINGTON: The US has accused Indian students arrested in connection with a fake university visa scam of being "aware they were committing a crime" for visas when they enrolled at the institution while lawyers for those charged accused the government of tricking them.

The State Department said in a statement: "All participants in this scheme knew that the University of Farmington had no instructors or classes (neither online nor in-person) and were aware they were committing a crime in an attempt to fraudulently remain in the US."

The US reaction came after India's External Affairs Ministry issued a demarche to the US embassy in New Delhi asserting that the students "have been duped into enrolling in the 'university' (and) should be treated differently from those recruiters who have duped them".

Lawyers for the accused recruiters in the scam on Monday accused the government of tricking the students into enrolling at the University of Farmington, a fake institution set up by US law enforcement officials in a sting operation to crackdown on visa fraud, according to the Detroit Free Press.

Last week, US immigration officials arrested 129 Indian students and eight alleged recruiters involved with the university.

John Brusstar, a lawyer for one of the accused recruiters, criticized the sting operation saying "it is unfair for the government

to set up something like this to entrap people", the Free Press reported.

The students face only civil immigration charges while the eight alleged recruiters have been charged with conspiracy to commit visa fraud and harbouring aliens for profit and face maximum sentences of five years.

Some of the arrested students have been released from custody

on condition that they wear ankle monitors that would allow authorities to monitor their movements electronically.

About 600 students who joined the fake university may be at risk of legal action. Five of the alleged recruiters were produced wearing shackles in a federal court in Detroit on Monday and denied they were guilty, according to the Free Press.

The lawyers for four of them agreed to their being held in jail because they face detention by immigration authorities as they are undocumented, the newspaper said.

The newspaper quoted prosecutors as saying that the students enrolled at the fake university in order to get jobs under a student visa programme called Curricular Practical Training (CPT) that

would allow them to work.

But lawyers for the accused countered saying that such programmes are legitimate and that the government had tricked them into joining the University of Farmington. Many of the students had come to the US on legitimate student visas and studied at other universities but were trying to extend their stay through CPT visas by transferring to Farmington.



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