

News from Belfast

Human rights champion in Belfast



Lord Diljit Rana with Rajendra Babu.

Lord Diljit Rana, Honorary Consul for India in Northern Ireland, hosted a recent fact-finding visit to Belfast by Sri Rajendra Babu, chairman of the National Human Rights Commission of India. He was in Northern Ireland to explore human rights issues with local organisations. Former Chief Justice of India, Sri Babu, was appointed chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) last year.

Business links explored

Business opportunities in India for Northern Ireland companies across a range of industries will be outlined at a major 'Doing Business with India' conference in Belfast on May 14. Over 100 Northern Ireland companies will attend the conference which will hear up-to-date presentations on opportunities and how to do business in India from a panel of experts. The conference is being organised by Invest Northern Ireland, the region's main economic development agency, which set up an office in Mumbai last year to promote trade and investment. The agency has also recently appointed two Indians to work with Northern Ireland companies.

Indian historian links with Belfast university

Deepak Kumar, professor of History of Science and Education at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, spoke on the theme 'Science and Society: A Historical Perspective' at Queen's University, Belfast, in April. Kumar delivered a lecture in the university's India Series, which brings internationally renowned scholars from India to Belfast.

In addition to a well-attended public lecture, Kumar gave a series of talks to students at the Belfast university as part of its focus on building scholarship links, research collaboration, and staff and student exchanges with leading Indian universities.

Tackling illegal immigration



From left, Anil Malhotra, H.S. Mattewal, Creon Butler and Lord Diljit Rana at a

conference in Chandigarh. The conference, 'Immigration — Myths and Realities', explored some of the current issues on immigration between India and the United Kingdom. Speakers included Creon Butler, U.K. Deputy High Commissioner to India, and H.S. Mattewal, Punjab Advocate-General. The focus was on illegal immigration and the steps being taken by the Indian and the U.K. governments to counter this.

Vice President Mohammad Ansari conferred honorary degree



India's Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari was on April 9 awarded an honorary degree by the prestigious Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The citation, read out by the University Rector, Tolegen Kozhamkulov, applauded the Vice President for furthering the cause of India-Kazakhstan relations.

Accepting the honour, Ansari said:

"India's focus since Independence has been to improve our people's lives through inclusive economic development within a pluralist, secular, equitable and democratic framework. In making this effort, India has also decisively demonstrated that democracy and development are compatible and necessary for ensuring sustainability."

Ansari added: "The primary task of our foreign policy has been to enable the transformation of India's society and economy, restoring traditional patterns of dealing with the world, and building strategic autonomy of choice."

In his opening remarks, the Rector spoke about the exchange programme for scholars and teachers between the university and various centres of higher learning in India.

The university is one of the oldest educational institutions in Central Asia.

Ambedkar Jayanti celebrated at India House in London on April 14



Gandhi speaks again in London's East End

April 12 saw the unifying climax to the Festival of Non-violence, as the Gandhi Tour Benefit Concert came to East London's historical Kingsley Hall — the very venue where Mahatma Gandhi stayed on his trip to London in 1931. At a time when reaching the younger generation and traversing cultural barriers with messages of peace is pivotal, Tribes of the World joined forces with Music 4 Peace to host the concert, which was inspired by the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. The entire event was streamed live via synclive.com.

The concert marked the grand finale of the Festival of Non-Violence, organised to commemorate the years that have passed since the assassination of two advocates and practitioners of non-violence — Mahatma Gandhi, 60 years ago, and Martin Luther King, 40 years ago. The principal aim of the festival was to remind Londoners and visitors, of the depth and power of non-violence and its pervasive power today in solving the major problems of our city and the world at large.

The concert was also part of the Gandhi Tour's annual, multi-city global music and art tour. The tour and event was endorsed by Dr. Arun Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, who continues to spread his grandfather's message of non-violence, multicultural understanding, world peace, and ending global hunger.

Dr. Gandhi's aim is to use the conduit of urban and world music genres to promote a universal message of non-violence. The fund raised from the Gandhi Tour are being donated to the school that Dr. Gandhi is

building in India, which was a dream of his wife, who passed away last year.

Guests attending the concert were unified in silence when, at 7 pm, Tushar Gandhi — great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and son of Dr. Gandhi — delivered an emotional address to the audience, via telephone from India. He once more conveyed the Mahatma's message of peace and non-violence to the local community of East London, in what proved to be an iconic moment that marked Gandhi's "second coming" to the venue.

He said, "The Festival of Non-Violence has brought people together, who stand in solidarity, which is crucial at a time of when the world stands on the brink of violence in all forms. 'Bapu' (Mahatma Gandhi) spent his life trying to harmonise the world with his message of peace, and thank you very much for all of you there tonight, for coming together to keep his message alive."

Another key highlight of the concert was the emotional live performance by the World-Beat band, 1001 Ways, and their multi-media programme, featuring a rare recording and footage of Mahatma Gandhi. The footage dates back to Mahatma's trip to London in 1931, when he chose to stay at Kingsley Hall among members of the working class of East London, instead of staying at a luxury hotel as advised by British politicians at the time.

The footage showed Gandhi meeting members of East End's working class community, including Pearly King, whose children presented Gandhi with an apple. This was combined with a rarely heard audio recording of the Mahatma delivering a

Bhavan offers degree in Indian music

Trinity College of Music, in partnership with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, U.K., will now offer a B.Mus degree in Indian music. This is a four-year course, validated by the University of Westminster.

The four-year course will be based at the Bhavan's site in West London. The Bhavan has a long tradition in teaching and performing Indian music and dance. Pandit Ravi Shankar is a patron of the Bhavan in London and is taking a keen interest in the course.

The resources at the Bhavan include rehearsal studios, a concert hall, a library and an archive with computer and listening facilities.

Students will also have access to the college's Jerwood Library.

Offering specialisations in Hindustani and Carnatic music, the course prepares students for a portfolio career. Business skills and leadership play an important role, in addition to performance, teaching, improvisation and composition.

Students can acquire advanced musical skills in relevant instrumental/vocal techniques supported by historical/theoretical studies and would also be able to choose their electives.

One-to-one teaching is at the heart of the 'performance study'.

The course is delivered by a team of Bhavan's teachers supplemented by top teachers and artistes from India.

For further information, please contact the Course Administrator, Bhavan's Degree Office on: degree@bhavan.net, Tel: 00 44 20 7381 3608/4608

philosophical speech about God and truthfulness.

Set against the thematic backdrop of "Unity in Diversity", Tribes of the World brought together a concert that showcased an eclectic grouping of indigenous art and artists on one common platform which included 1001 Ways, Bianca Rose, Khaliq, Norma Lewis, Ash King, Kirsty Crawford, David Ferrard, Totemic feat. Djun Djetti, Orchard Rose, Randomites Dancers, MC Xander, Random, Phoenix Rose, Inside Us All and stage circus acts Rainbow Collective and Acro Yoga.

Among the guest speakers at the event was Michael Johnson, spiritual adviser to the United Nations, who said: "This wonderful event has been done on a wing and a prayer, with a lot of passion and dedication from everyone involved. This is a work of peace in motion. Living in peace, being in peace and working together in peace — this is an important contribution to the world today."

"I represent Pathways to Peace at the U.N., and we want to make the Day of Peace, on September 21, an international event."

"Huge global networks are coming together to strengthen the mission for peace and to help and support each other. This event is an example of that — people dedicating the time and energy to making that happen."

"It's time for action and finding out what the pathway to peace is. Artists and musicians are about social transformation. It is about the power of prayer and connecting to the Great Spirit."