PRESS RELEASE

CELEBRATION OF NAVRATRI FESTIVAL AT THE EMBASSY OF INDIA

The Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Indian community, celebrated the vibrant Navratri festival on Saturday, October 13, 2024, at the Chancery premises. Embassy has been actively involved in promoting Indian culture across Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, even with a relatively small Indian community in these regions. The enthusiasm to celebrate traditional festivals like Navratri, Diwali, and Holi remains strong, with each event witnessing remarkable participation.

2. The Embassy plays a crucial role in fostering cultural exchange and enhancing India's image abroad by organizing such cultural events. These festivals serve as a bridge to bring together diverse communities and help promote Indian heritage in Central America. The Embassy's cultural initiatives have included the successful celebration of Diwali last year, attended by approximately 1,500 people, including local dignitaries, Indian community members, and friends of India. Similarly, the Holi festival attracted around 500 participants who came together to enjoy the colors and festivities. These efforts contribute to strengthening the cultural bonds and understanding between India and the host nations.

3. Navratri, meaning "nine nights," is a major Hindu festival celebrated in honor of Goddess Durga. It symbolizes the triumph of good over evil and is marked by dance, music, fasting, and worship across different regions of India. Each day is dedicated to a different manifestation of the goddess, with devotees offering prayers and performing rituals. The festival is especially famous for its traditional folk dances, Garba and Dandiya Raas, which are performed with great zeal and enthusiasm.

4. The Navratri celebration at the Chancery began with Aarti, where all attendees participated in invoking the blessings of the goddess Durga. Following the Aarti, there were captivating dance performances by children and adults, showcasing traditional Indian dance forms. The highlight of the evening was the group Garba dance, where everyone, dressed in colorful traditional attire, danced to the rhythmic beats. The atmosphere was filled with joy and energy as participants celebrated together. To enhance the cultural experience, the Embassy & the Community served a variety of Indian cuisines, allowing the guests to indulge in authentic flavors from India. The event provided an opportunity for the local community to experience Indian culture first-hand, furthering the Embassy's efforts to promote cultural exchange.

5. Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra greeted all the attendees at the Navratri celebration and extended his warm wishes for the festival. He

expressed his delight in witnessing the enthusiasm of the Indian community in Guatemala despite its small size and praised their efforts in keeping cultural traditions alive. The Ambassador assured everyone of the Embassy's continued support for organizing Indian festivals, emphasizing the importance of celebrating significant occasions like Diwali, Holi, and Navratri with full zeal. He highlighted the role of such events in fostering cultural exchange and strengthening the bonds between India and the people of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

6. The celebration of Navratri at the Embassy of India was a resounding success, reflecting the zeal and dedication of the Indian community and the Embassy's commitment to promoting Indian culture in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. These cultural events not only keep the spirit of Indian traditions alive abroad but also create a platform for cultural diplomacy, fostering stronger relations and mutual appreciation between India and Central America.

7. The Embassy of India is actively preparing for the Diwali Festival, scheduled for November 9, 2024. A flagship event of the Embassy’s cultural outreach, has already seen significant interest, with approximately 1000 people registered to attend. With these efforts, Embassy's initiatives continue to resonate with people from diverse backgrounds, reinforcing cultural ties and providing a glimpse into the richness of India's heritage.

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Guatemala, 13 October 2024