PRESS RELEASE

DIWALI FESTIVAL ORGANIZED BY THE INDIAN EMBASSY

Embassy of India in Guatemala organized a grand Diwali celebration to mark Diwali, the Festival of Lights, on 9th November 2024 in association with the Indian community & the Municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez. The festival was attended by over 500 guests from both the Indian and Guatemalan communities. This event has grown to become one of the most significant cultural exchanges between the two countries, showcasing the vibrancy and rich traditions of Indian culture.

2. The Embassy of India in Guatemala City, with concurrent accreditation to Honduras and El Salvador, plays an instrumental role in strengthening India's cultural bonds with the region by engaging both the Indian diaspora and local communities in vibrant celebrations of Indian festivals. These events are central to the Embassy's cultural diplomacy, bridging diverse backgrounds and fostering mutual understanding and respect. Recently, the Embassy has drawn significant attention from the local public with major celebrations, including Holi, Diwali, Independence Day, Republic Day, and the International Day of Yoga. Celebrating festivals like Diwali, Holi, and India's national days has not only preserved the traditions and heritage of the Indian community but also serves as a powerful medium for cross-cultural exchange. For the Indian expatriate community, these events provide an essential connection to their cultural roots, allowing them to celebrate rituals that carry deep emotional meaning and reinforce their identity and sense of belonging, even while living far from home. For Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans, these gatherings offer a vibrant introduction to Indian culture, allowing firsthand experiences of its customs, music, dance, attire, and cuisine. Local participation has grown significantly each year, with approximately 5,000 attendees at IDY 2024, another 5,000 for Holi in El Salvador in 2023, around 500 for Holi 2024 in Guatemala City, and close to 1,500 for Diwali 2023.

3. Diwali celebrations, emphasizing the themes of light, unity, and good over evil, resonating with universal values has been immensely accepted by the local public and participation in these events has received overwhelming welcome. Moreover, the Embassy's active engagement has led to an enthusiastic response from the local community, with increasing support from local partners and officials who see value in celebrating and promoting Indian culture. Collaborations with municipalities, local businesses, and cultural institutions enhance the reach and impact of these events, making them more accessible and appealing to a diverse audience. In Guatemala, for instance, the participation of local partners such as the Municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez and national brands

has underscored the growing impact and popularity of these events, reflecting the deepening cultural ties between India and the region. Over the years, the Indian Embassy in Guatemala has organized several successful Diwali events, each year seeing an increasing number of participants.

4. This year's Diwali festival was particularly remarkable, marked by strong support from local partners the Municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez. Its involvement was instrumental in expanding the event's reach and enhancing its cultural impact. The evening unfolded with a range of captivating performances that brought Indian and Guatemalan traditions to life for an enthusiastic audience. The festivities began with the traditional lighting of the lamp, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness—a fitting opening to the vibrant celebration. Highlights included spectacular Bollywood dance performances by troupes like Bolly Sun, Satva Anand and Club de Danza UVG from both El Salvador and Guatemala, whose high-energy routines left the crowd spellbound. The Municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez showcased its cultural heritage through a mesmerizing performance by the Mayan Marimba, along with an appearance by Elias García, the esteemed 132-year-old musical band that added a soulful resonance to the evening. A standout segment of the festival was the fashion show, which celebrated the beauty and diversity of traditional attire from both India and Guatemala. The festival truly embodied a spirit of unity, bridging cultural divides and building connections through the shared joy of celebration.

5. In his address, Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra expressed his gratitude to all attendees, sponsors, and partners for making the event a grand success. He highlighted the significance of Diwali in promoting unity, positivity, and cultural exchange, emphasizing the importance of such events in strengthening ties between India and Guatemala. The Ambassador also praised the growing interest in Indian culture in Guatemala, noting the increasing attendance year after year, and reiterated India's commitment to deepening bilateral relations. Mayor Pellecer of San Juan Sacatepéquez, who has been a vital partner in the Embassy's cultural outreach, shared his enthusiasm for participating in the Diwali festival. He acknowledged the growing popularity of the event among the local population and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to celebrate this important festival of lights alongside the Indian community. His remarks underscored the positive impact of Diwali in fostering understanding and goodwill between Guatemala and India, while also showcasing the municipality's commitment to continuing its support for such cultural exchanges.

6. One of the evening's most eagerly anticipated segments was the vibrant fashion show, which served as a stunning showcase of traditional

attire from both India and Guatemala. The event beautifully highlighted the elegance and diversity of each nation's cultural heritage through fashion. Indian participants graced the stage in a variety of exquisite saris, each draped in a unique style that demonstrated the versatility and timeless beauty of India's iconic garment. The saris' rich colors and intricate designs captivated the audience, providing a glimpse into the artistry and craftsmanship integral to Indian textile traditions. Complementing the Indian display, Guatemalan participants, including models from San Juan Sacatepéquez, proudly presented their traditional attire, with its vibrant hues and intricate patterns symbolizing Guatemala's cultural heritage. Adding a delightful fusion element to the show, several Guatemalan models wore Indian saris, symbolizing the deepening bonds and cultural exchange between the two countries. This blending of traditions illustrated the warmth and mutual appreciation that exists between India and Guatemala, where fashion served as a bridge uniting both communities in a celebration of cultural diversity. The participation of models from San Juan Sacatepéquez in Indian saris underscored the spirit of collaboration and mutual respect, making this segment a true highlight of the evening and a memorable representation of unity in diversity.

7. The Embassy's Diwali festival concluded with a breathtaking fireworks display, made possible with support from the Municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez. Lighting up the night sky, the vibrant colors and dazzling lights captured the spirit of Diwali, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness. The event was secured with special arrangements by the Municipality of Guatemala City, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for all. The spectacular fireworks drew awe and admiration from attendees, becoming a memorable highlight and perfectly closing the evening's festivities.

8. The Diwali festival has now become an essential part of the cultural calendar in Guatemala. The Embassy's efforts to organize such events demonstrate the importance of cultural diplomacy in strengthening India-Guatemala relations. The growing interest in Indian culture among Guatemalans, reflected in the increasing number of local attendees and the participation of local partners, shows the positive impact of these events. Such celebrations provide an invaluable platform for mutual understanding, exchange, and collaboration, contributing to the deepening of cultural and diplomatic ties between the two nations. The success of Diwali 2024 highlights the potential for furthering India-Guatemala relations, making this festival a key milestone in the ongoing cultural partnership. Through these efforts, the Embassy not only strengthens the bond with its diaspora but also contributes to the cultural fabric of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. This exchange of traditions and

values builds goodwill and encourages collaborative relationships, providing a solid foundation for broader diplomatic and economic ties.