

*Holi Mahotsav - 3 April 2005
Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour*

The Holi Mahotsav is celebrated in India in all its colour and vibrancy on the day after the full moon in early March every year. This year once again, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia in conjunction with India Tourism Sydney organized the celebrations on Sunday, 3 April at Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour Sydney.

This year's celebrations commenced at 10.30am on stage with music and dance by our local artistes ranging from the traditional Indian cultural performances to the more contemporary themes of Bollywood songs, Indian rap, belly dance and jazz fusion. As the crowd kept steadily increasing, the festivities continued with the throwing of coloured powders on one another in a designated area. To further add to the fun of the children and others there were also roving entertainers who were distributing Easter eggs to the children.

Around the park were various stalls selling delicious vegetarian cuisines ranging from Chinese, South Indian, North Indian and from various regions of India. It was not surprising too see how many people queued for as long as 30 minutes to eat some of the traditional delicacies of India. There were also stalls of spiritual foundations and yoga schools, cultural and Indian business organizations.

SBS Radio, a Government funded multicultural community National Radio station had their float for the whole day. They had interactive programs with the crowd and listeners, and interviewed some of the VIP's and general public members for broadcasting the next day in 9 main languages and also other languages of the Indian Sub-Continent.

The VIP session began at 2:00pm. The session was inaugurated by singing the National Anthem of India and the National Anthem of Australia. Mr Gambhir Watts, President of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia welcomed the VIPs and special guests and extended the message of peace and friendship to all who attended the day's function- people who had congregated to hear and speak about the relevance of the ancient culture of India in modern Sydney.



The other speakers were Deputy Consul General of India, Sydney Vanlalhuma representing the Hon M.Ganapathi, Consul general of India, The Hon. Alan Cadman MP representing the Hon Peter McGauran, Minister of Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, The Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP, Shadow for Immigration, The Hon Kayee Griffin, MLC, Temporary Chair of Committees, representing the Premier of NSW, Hon. Bob Carr MP, Michael Richardson, Shadow Minister for Environment representing The Hon John Brogden, Leader of the opposition, Stephan Kerkyasharian, Chairman Community Relations Commission For a Multicultural NSW and Gauri Shankar Dhar, Regional Director Asia Pacific, India Tourism. Other VIP's who attended the event were Julie Ownes, Federal MP for Parramatta, The Hon Ejaz Ahmed, Consul General of Pakistan, Mr Mohana Kumaran, Head of Chancery, Consulate General of India, Wayne Prior, Director Commercial Services, Sydney Olympic Park Authority, Neville Roach, Chairman Australia India Business Council, Harmohan Singh Walia, Community Leader, Atmaram Prabhu, President ISKON NSW & South Australia.

The festivities continued until 6.30pm and culminated with people dancing in exuberance on the Bhangra performances by Devinder Singh Dharia.

The entire cultural program for the day was organized by Ms Mayuri Singh Event Coordinator, Utkarsh Doshi and Rajesh Katakdhond of Bhavan Australia under the guidance of Avijit Sarkar, Cultural Director. Bhoji Watts, Manju Chand, Mala Mehta, Nayana Purohit were the Stage Managers. Dr Swati Kapila, Preeti Chugh, Priya Vishwanathan and Moksha Watts shared the entire function as Master of Ceremonies. From Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority who helped us put the entire event together were Damian Jeacle, Alexandra Boyce, Graham Griffith and Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Casual Event Staff. Their contribution which was the heart of the function is greatly lauded.

More than 150 artists / students from NSW from 22 different Dance Schools/Groups performed during the cultural programme throughout the day. Some groups were also from as far as Blue Mountains and Wollongong.

Over 41,309 people were estimated to have passed through Darling Harbour on that day most of whom are expected to have passed through the event. It was a pleasure to see such a mix of cultures coming together under one banner to experience the happiness and depth of traditional Vedic Indian culture. We hope many people went away having learnt a little more, about the significance of the Holi festival, the ability for people to unite and transcend boundaries of race, caste, culture, age and gender, or simply having rejoiced in the rich colour and diversity of life in God's creation.

A colourful and informative Souvenir designed by Rajesh Katakdhond and Utkarsh Doshi under the guidance of Jagannath Rao, Director Bhavan Australia was released on the occasion which contained special messages from His Excellency P.P.Shukla High Commissioner of India, The Hon John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW, The Hon Bob Carr, Premier of NSW, Stepan Kerkyasharian, Chairman Community Relations Commission For a Multicultural NSW, Shankar Dhar, Regional Director India Tourism Sydney.

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