Indian consulate celebrates Hanukkah

AYOTI MITTRA

The terrorists who target India will be taken to task, said Prabhul Dayal, India’s consul general in New York, at the Hanukkah celebrations hosted by the Indian consulate, December 28.

The celebrations — the consulate’s second Hanukkah event — were organized with the Indian Jewish congregation of the United States of America.

Consul Sasi Kumar discussed the importance of the Jewish community and the festival of Hanukkah. Dayal and his wife lit the first hanukkia consisting of eight candles. Deputy Consul General A M Gondane and Pravin Kumar lit the second hanukkia, said Romiel Daniel, president, Indian Jewish congregation of USA.

The event — attended by about 150 people including New Jersey Councilman Gary S Schaer and Councilwoman Linda Greenstein — featured Israeli and Indian classical dances and concluded with vegetarian and kosher food.

The attendance was “more than we could handle,” said Daniel. “We want cultural intermingling which is why we called people from all American and Indian Jewish communities.”

“We are all one, united, we live in peace in the US which is no different from the way we were in India,” said Lael Daniel of the congregation.

The Indian Jewish congregation of USA was formed in 1995. “The aim was to give voice and recognition to the Indian Jewish community present in the US,” said Lael Daniel. Following the floods in Mumbai in 2005, many Torahs and other religious textbooks were ruined. The Indian Jewish community in Mumbai turned to the New York organization for help. The Indian Jewish congregation of USA raised funds; since then they have been a registered nonprofit organization.

The Jewish population in India has reduced to about 4,000 because most chose to leave India to migrate to Israel over the years. The majority of India’s Jewish community lives in Mumbai.

For details, visit: http://www.BharatVilas.com
At New India House

Hanukkah celebration at Consulate General of India

New Jersey Assembly members Gary S. Schaer and Linda R. Greenstein joined India’s Consul General Prabhu Dayal and approximately 150 members of the Indian Jewish community at the Hanukkah celebration at the Consulate General of India on December 28. The event, hosted by the Consulate General of India and organized by the Indian Jewish Congregation of USA was held at the New India House.

Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula, was not able to attend the celebration but he facilitated representation of the New Jersey General Assembly by inviting Assembly members Greenstein and Schaer, both Jewish, to the celebration. (Compiled from a press release)

Christmas celebration in Jersey City

Midnight Mass at St. John the Baptist Church

PHOTO RIGHT: Father Michael Santoro, the pastor, center, at St. John the Baptist Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, is seen at the Midnight Mass, during the celebrations of the Eucharist on Christmas Eve. The pastor told Desi Talk, “Indian Americans bring their special devotional sense of faith to the church.” Father Santoro, who has been at the church for a year and a half, said that the parish is about 125 years old and the church was built in the late 1800s.

PHOTOS BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: Indian Americans at the Midnight Mass. (Photo: Mohammed Jagfer/DesiTalkUSA)

United Nations

UN Secretary General says probe into Bhutto assassination to be set up

By Ela Dutt

U nited Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he expects to set up an independent Commission of Inquiry into the killing of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto soon. “On this painful anniversary, the Secretary General stands in solidarity with the Government and the people of Pakistan and assures them of his commitment to contribute to their search for truth and justice,” said the statement released by Ban’s spokesperson December 26.

In July, Ban discussed the nature of the commission with Pakistani Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, including its funding, composition, and impartiality. The Dec. 26 statement said the UN Secretariat has also consulted members of the UN Security Council about the Commission.

“The Secretary General is hopeful that, with the progression of the discussions, the Commission could be established in the near future,” it concluded. (Compiled from a press release)

From City Hall

New York is the safest big city, says Bloomberg

By Ela Dutt

M ayor Michael Bloomberg, announcing another year of decline in crimes said New York City was the safest big city in the country.

In his weekly radio address delivered December 29, Bloomberg said crime was down again seven years running, in public housing developments, in the transit system, and in schools in all five boroughs “Citywide, we’ve reduced crime by about four percent this year and nearly 30 percent over the past seven years,” he said.

“This holiday season I hope that all New Yorkers will say a prayer of thanks for the men and women of the NYPD, who take such incredible risks on our behalf, and who have made New York the safest big city in the nation.

“And most impressively, they’ve done all that while also keeping our city safe from ter-

or,” the Mayor maintained. “We know that New York is still a powerful symbol of the free-
dom and diversity that our enemies find so threatening.

“That’s why we keep strengthening our counter-terrorism efforts with programs such as the Lower Manhattan Security Initiative, which is bringing the latest surveillance and detection technology to the area south of Canal Street.”

Rape has decreased more than one-third since 2001. Serious assaults were down 8 per-
cent this year and 31 percent over 7 years, he noted. During the 1980s and early 90s, New York City recorded more than 1,200 murders a year. In 2002, the number of murders fell to below 600 for the first time in four decades, and the city has managed to keep it at that for all these years despite 3,000 fewer police officers.

According to the Mayor, it is Operation Impact, a program started in 2003, that has driven crime to record lows, and that program will be continued into 2009. (Compiled from a press release)