

## FELICITATION AND INTERACTION WITH 85<sup>TH</sup> AND 86<sup>TH</sup> BATCHES OF KIP



Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC)-Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP), in collaboration with Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi hosted the delegates of 85<sup>th</sup> and 86<sup>th</sup> batches of the Know India Program (KIP), a flagship initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to connect with the Indian Diaspora across the globe, on 22 January 2026 at Janki Devi Memorial College (JDMC), University of Delhi, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital Marg, New Delhi. These combined batches brought together seventy-eight participants from twenty countries: Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the UK, Fiji, France (Including Reunion Island), Malawi, Panama, Guyana, Israel, Mauritius, Myanmar, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and the USA. The main theme of the program was in sync with the initiative of the government of India, **“Nationwide Commemoration of 150 Years of ‘Vande Mataram”**. This program was organised under the guidance of Prof. Sandhya Garg, Vice Principal, JDMC, University of Delhi. After a formal welcome of the delegates, the lamp-lighting ceremony, and a presentation of the College prayer, followed by the **Kulgeet of Delhi University (दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय का कुलगीत)** by the 'Sarang', the Indian Music Society of JDMC, Prof. Swati Pal, Principal, JDMC, presented the welcome address. (full text of her welcome address is on next page) A short film highlighting all the milestones achieved by the JDMC was also displayed. Amb. Vinod Kumar, President, ARSP, explained the relevance of KIP through the lights of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. He emphasised the need for a common identity throughout the globe. He said that

in the present day, the distinction between the 'Old' and 'New' diaspora is not applicable, which were earlier used to describe the POIs. In the end, he advised the delegates to make their adopted homeland feel that they are honoured and proud to have them. This was followed by the cultural performances by the different groups/societies of the JDMC. It has beautifully blended the Western, Indian, Classical, and modern art forms. Dr Komal Chikara, Assistant Professor, University of Delhi, conducted a workshop titled "Vande Mataram to Viksit Bharat: The journey of Indian aspirations", in which she beautifully traced the history of Vande Mataram since its inception.



The second session begins with the workshop, titled 'Discover Bharat: A Visual Feast', conducted by Dr Astha Agarwal. This was purely an activity-based moment. The delegates were divided into teams, and a quiz was conducted. This activity helped delegates identify culturally significant personalities, monuments, and listen to songs on the film soundtrack and recognise songs. The winning team was also awarded. The quiz fostered teamwork and knowledge-sharing, and left a lasting impression on the participants. This was followed by Prof. Swati Pal's introductory remark and the felicitation of the Ambassadors and the High Commissioners. Shri Gopal Arora, Secretary, ARSP, highlighted the heavy work done by our ancestors and ARSP to connect with the diaspora spread across the globe. He pointed out two important tasks fulfilled by the KIP: to connect with the educational institution and to connect with NGOs. In that light, he emphasised the importance of the Short-Term Course. H.E. Mr. Jagannath Sami, High Commissioner of the Republic of Fiji, New Delhi, talked about the shared vision and mission of India and Fiji. He explained the shrewdness of the Britishers in calling the 'Girmi people' as 'Indentured Labourers' or 'a party to some agreement', in which all the terms were already decided by them only. He also questioned being called a 'coolie'. He referred to the reasons for the forced migration from almost every part of the colonised India (especially from U.P. and Bihar) under the umbrella of a quote, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10, New King James Version). H.E. Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, High Commissioner of the Republic of Guyana, appreciated the diversity of India and its achievements since independence. He talked about Highbury monuments and threw light on the cultural similarity between India and Guyana. He emphasised the fact that if India prospers, its soft power grows, and more and more Guyanese will feel proud of their Indian roots. He also expressed concern about nearly 40% of the PIOs who do not speak Hindi, but at the same time, felt proud that they kept our culture preserved. H.E. Mr. Chandradath Singh, High Commissioner of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, praised the government of India for setting an example with the KIP initiative to connect the Indian diaspora. He talked about connecting factors such as Cuisines, Garments, music, especially the Bollywood, which has done the job more efficiently. These are also important forces in maintaining the tradition. Ms Sunaina Mohan, CdA, at the Embassy of the Republic of Suriname, remembers her journey as a delegate in the KIP batch to inspire the current batch. She gave much attention to Hindi as a binding force

and a source of pride in Indian roots. She talked about the six cultural aspects that have been preserved by the Suriname; *the Bhasha, the Bhesha, the Bhajan, the Bhojan, the Bhootkaal, and the Bhawana* (i.e. the Language, Appearance, Devotional songs, Food, History, and the Feelings). She highlighted the growth of Suriname and that of the Hindustani people as the backbone of Suriname's economy. Mr Mahesh Mahakumara, First Secretary, High Commissioner of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, focused mainly on education and the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka. He said that the primary way through which one can achieve real strength is to have continuous education. He also termed the relations of Sri Lanka with India as 'Civilizational linkage'. Peter Mahafha, First Secretary: Political, High Commission of South Africa, traced India's relations with South Africa since Apartheid times. He said that India was too vocal about it and supported the anti-apartheid movement. He also remembered Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. He drew much attention to the present relations and the shared vision of India and South Africa in BRICS. This was followed by an interactive session, in which participants provided their views about India based on their various attachments. The participants were quite impressed with their visit, not only to reconnect with their ancestral land but also to witness what India had achieved in various spheres of socio-economic and technological development. They said that they felt very proud of the management of a complex and pluralistic democracy by the Government of India and expressed their rich experience and lessons learnt during this visit. Concluding remark and Vote of Thanks were presented by Shri Narayan Kumar, Hon. Director, ARSP. The program ended with the distribution of certificates to the delegates of KIP for their active participation.