



# Inaugural Session

## Address by Mr Yashwant Sinha, Minister for External Affairs of India

This historic *jugalbandi* and the heavenly music that we have heard just now could have gone on forever and nobody would mind.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, His Excellency Rt Hon'ble Mr Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister, Shri L K Advani, Dr L M Singhvi, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, My Cabinet Colleagues, Distinguished Members of Parliament from India and abroad, and Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my most pleasant duty to welcome all of you here for the '*Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*'. January 9 is a very special day. It was on this day that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. The choice of this date for the celebration of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is, therefore, most appropriate. Just as the Mahatma changed the course of Indian history after his return, I am certain, overseas Indians will play a major role in building a glorious future for India and for the world. An eminent predecessor of mine had outlined India's vision towards overseas Indians. He declared at a seminar in New Delhi, and I quote:

*"The subject of overseas Indians is one which is very dear to our hearts. Everyone of Indian origin, overseas, is a representative of India and retains many aspects of our cultural traditions and civilization. Though our sons and daughters have gone abroad to work or to reside there, India will never disown them or fail to appreciate and respect their essential loyalty to the culture and heritage of the mother country."*

These words were spoken 25 years ago by none else than our respected Prime Minister. It is his inspiring leadership, which has made this event possible today. If the concerns and interests of NRIs and PIOs are currently on the top of our national agenda, it is entirely due to the direction provided by the Hon'ble Prime Minister. I thank you, Sir, for the inspiration, guidance, and support you have provided for the organization of this event and the realization of your dream of 25 years ago. We have amidst us today entrepreneurs, scientists, economists, scholars, writers, social workers, public figures and national leaders. The Indian diaspora has made a distinctive impact on everyone of the countries in which they live by virtue of their loyalty, dedication, hard work and success. Each one of you who has maintained and at the same time is maintaining your commitment to Bharatiyata or Indianness has done India proud. Every one of you here is an achiever in your own right and as you succeed, India succeeds with you. The love and affection with which the Indian diaspora regards India, its people, its culture, and its concerns, is something which strikes everyone who comes into contact with members of the diaspora. Here, I quote Jawaharlal Nehru what he said about India and her children:

*"But she is lovable and none of her children can forget her wherever they go or whatever strange fate befalls them, for she is part of them in her greatness as well as her feelings."*

I believe that we have every reason to be optimistic about India, the Indian diaspora, and our partnership. Today is only the beginning. We will, in future, organize many more such events. With each year, the activities for involving overseas Indians will go

bigger and better. The Indian diaspora has today come into its own. Similarly, India too has arrived on the world stage.

Let me extend a warm welcome to all eminent Indians who have gathered here today from abroad and from India, in particular, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, His Excellency Rt Hon'ble Mr Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, and Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister, Shri L K Advani. To conclude, the colours of our passports are different; the religions we profess are not the same; our mother tongues vary; and the regions from which our ancestors came are far apart, but "*Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani*".

## **Theme Presentation by Dr L M Singhvi, Chairman, Organizing Committee of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**

Our beloved Prime Minister, Rt Hon'ble Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, our esteemed Deputy Prime Minister, our External Affairs Minister, Hon'ble Ministers, Chief Ministers, Members of Parliaments from India and abroad, Excellencies and Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The dawn of "*Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*" with the heavenly and harmonious musical invocation by our two Bharat Ratnas marks the birth of a new idea, a far-reaching new perception, a vibrant new conception, and a pioneering inception. It is the first step in our journey of a thousand miles and the first step is always the most crucial, the most significant, the most memorable, and the most momentous. Today, by common consent, the Indian diaspora is a force to reckon with and constitute what I termed long ago as the national reserve and resource of India. For the diaspora, India remains an emotive core and will, I hope, become a destination for a meaningful and practical partnership in common endeavours. There is much we can do together. I hope and pray that Providence will bless this propitious beginning for a fascinating journey of this fruitful exploration, and endeavour and in the years to come we will look upon it as the starting point of a consecrated and purposeful new pilgrimage of this kindled togetherness of the global Indian family. This and here and now is the future history in the making, for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is not merely about the past and its problems, or the present and its challenges, this is about our resolve to contribute to our common future.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is an attempt to take on board the unfinished agenda of our freedom struggle and of about post-Independence contemporary concerns for the Indian diaspora and for the Indian diaspora's hard-felt need to relate to India. To achieve our objectives, we have to be prepared to climb every mountain, to ford every stream, and to follow every rainbow, till we find our dreams and make them come true. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is an affectionate invitation and a loving gift of Mother India to its overseas children, a gift of our distinguished Prime Minister's commitment to the idea of building bridges between India and the Indian diaspora. This is a theme on which I dared to dream long ago, the seedling and the sapling, which I nursed for more than four years, but the time for the fruition and fulfilment of the idea arrived when Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to the Prime Ministerial office. It is to him, as the *Karta* of the large and sprawling global Indian family, that we hold the vision of cultural statesmanship, which has brought the diaspora into focus for India and for the diaspora itself. He made it possible for us to disprove the cynical adage of Dr Johnson, who had said that,

*"A committee consists of individuals who can do nothing individually and collectively decide that nothing can be done."*

Mr Prime Minister, in the ultimate analysis, a report is only as good as its implementation. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and Pravasi Bharat Samman constitute only the first installment

of the implementation of the recommendations of our Committee, which has made, in all, some 160 recommendations based on a hard-headed and warm-hearted study of vast and massive data, including a large number of country profiles. Our recommendations cover every part of the world, every walk of human endeavour and every department in the government as well as the civil society. Our recommendations offer, I submit, an integrated blueprint of a practical and purposeful partnership and solidarity between India and the Indian diaspora. I would suggest, Sir, that the Government should formulate a comprehensive diaspora policy, cultivate an informed interest in the diaspora and its core concerns including its human rights and human dignity and create an effective and a credible coordinating mechanism for diaspora's affairs. We should try to achieve international consensus on a more rational approach to migration and migrants and an approach to fight racism and prejudice, and I think the diaspora, on its part, should engage itself in the task of assisting India to transform itself into a powerhouse of development and cultural strengths. I hold the view that the strength of the diaspora is a part of the strength of India, and the strength of India will be the greatest source of strength and safety for the global Indian family.

Mr Prime Minister, you spoke in your famous New Year's musings, of connectivity of all kinds in a forward-looking manner for the transformation of India. The Indian diaspora and the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a shining example of the great potential of the human connectivity of the global Indian family. That connectivity makes for yet another global highway, which would be akin to the Pradhan Mantri Yojna for better connectivity through roads and highways within India. Ladies and gentlemen, the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has many firsts to its credit. It is for the first time that such a gathering of the global Indian family from sixty countries is taking place. It is for the first time that the great listening post has been created institutionally to hear the voices of the Indian diaspora carefully and systematically. It is for the first time that we have an opportunity to welcome a sizeable delegation among all the other countries from our French-and Dutch-speaking Indian diaspora and it is for the first time we have the most eminent statesmen, the most eminent scientists, academics, entrepreneurs, business leaders and the youth of the diaspora at a purpose-oriented conference where we would hold wide-ranging discussions on diverse themes. We shall also have a glimpse of the performing arts of the resident Indians and of the Indian diaspora. And most important of all, we shall have opportunities for fellowship and for discovering beauty and grace in the many-splendoured diversities of India and the Indian diaspora.

The Indian diaspora is a rainbow and, if I may say so, my head soars with a fond aspiration and pride and my heart leaps with boundless joy when I behold the rainbow of India and Indians over the globe. If globalization of India is to take place in the right perspective, I think it should grow in the right perception and right proportion must also take place with our Indian diaspora as the catalyst of cross-fertilization. This congregation and this auspicious beginning, I hope, will build a global diaspora network of bridges or what we call in ancient India "*Setubandhanam*". *Setubandhanam*, as a matter for some subdivision, ought to be at the heart of this festival of India and of the festival of Indian diaspora. Long ago, I composed a Sanskrit poem, of which I shall only give you two lines:

*"Setubandhanam sada bhawyam; Setubandhanam sada divyam, sada satyam sanatanam."*

Let this setu, let this bridge, be ever-magnificent. Let this always be graced by a divine purpose. Let this always represent the eternal truth and shine in the enduring and universal vision of India.

And now two lines in Hindi with which I would like to conclude:

*"Bharat aaye aaj pravasi, swagat karte bharatwasi;*

*Apno ke milap ka mela, yeh mela itihās likhega;*

*Naye vishwa mein naye setu ki, rachna ka vishwas likhega;*

*Bharatwasi aur pravasi, milkar saath challenge aage;*

*Yeh milaap hai rakshabandhan, sadiyon baad aaj hum jage;*

*Vasudha hai parivar hamara, hum sakar karenge sapna;*

*Vishwa bandhuta bharat darshan, vishwa hamara bharat apna;*

*Bharat aaye aaj pravasi, swagat karte bharatwasi."*

## **Special Address by Rt Hon'ble Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius**

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister, Distinguished Delegates, and Ladies and Gentlemen: I feel greatly honoured to be in your midst on this auspicious occasion of the First Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. I take this opportunity of thanking the Government of India for having granted me the award and I am deeply honoured and very grateful with all my thanks. I wish also, at the very outset, to thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for the personal invitation he extended to me to attend such an important celebration today. May I also thank heartily the Organizing Committee for the warm welcome and for the excellent arrangements for making our stay a most comfortable and memorable one.

We are all gathered here on this symbolic day of the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, which also marks the return of Mahatma Gandhiji after his long stay in South Africa. We are here also as true descendants of the first Indian immigrants that settled in countries far and wide and from east to west over hundreds of years ago. We have come to share our rich and diverse experience and to contribute in building a new framework for enhanced cooperation leading to a more prosperous and peaceful world for all of us. As we meet here, in the land of the greatest apostle of peace of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is my sincere wish that we were inspired by his message of courage, resilience, peace, and tolerance. There is no doubt in my mind that these perennial values of Indian civilization will remain a constant source of inspiration to us all. We have to strive endlessly towards building a world free of conflict, a planet worthy for the future generations respecting the highest values of humanism. Distinguished delegates from the humble labourer in the sugarcane fields to the whizkids of the Silicon Valley, from the small trader around the corner shop to the richest business magnet, from the factory worker to the Nobel laureate and NASA scientist, people of Indian origin across the globe contributed to the social upliftment of the countries in which they lived. Some of us have even been successful in the political arena and have become presidents and prime ministers. While the Indian brethren in foreign lands who are advancing rapid strides, India had established itself over the last decade as a global leader in science, technology, and industrial advancement. I wish here to place on record the great contribution of India in opening its universities and institutions of higher learning to thousands of sons and daughters of the Indian diaspora to undergo tertiary-level education. Today, thanks to India, they are accomplished topnotch professionals who are participating actively in the country's development.

Distinguished delegates, allow me to share with you all at this juncture some features of my country. Of some 1.5 million men and women who left India under the indentured labour system for the sugar colonies around 454,000 came to Mauritius and of those around 300,000 settled permanently. The life was one of extensive exploitation under a system, which curtailed their freedom of movement, which imposed a double cut of wages for one day's absence from work and which had little provision for healthcare, sanitation and basic amenities. Indeed, the sugar estate camps in which labourers were housed symbolized in many ways the misery,



which our brave ancestors had suffered to build a better future. For long, the previous generations have toiled from dawn to dusk through sweat and tears to build the very foundations of our modern society. In spite of all their tribulations, our forefathers have been able to give to us the rich and diverse cultural heritage, which they brought along with them. They realized and rightly so that culture is the essential ingredient, which confers identity and dignity to a community. In fact, there can be no real development and progress without cultural assertion. Though they were themselves mostly illiterate, yet they were wise enough to understand the all-encompassing meaning of culture in its broad definition to include education. The rights and traditions of the Indian immigrants have been transmitted from generation to generation and continue to flourish today in Mauritius. Our ancestors celebrated with fervour important religious festivals bringing together each component of the Mauritian society. In its endeavour to consolidate the ancestral cultural legacy, the Government of Mauritius has thought it wise and appropriate to support institutions such as the Hindi and Urdu-speaking unions and the Tamil-Telugu- Marathi cultural centres. Furthermore, Mauritius hosted the first World Hindi Conference outside India. I also wish to underline that Mauritius has been chosen as a seat of the World Hindi Secretariat. To mark the arrival of the first batch of indentured labourers in Mauritius on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1834 from India, an annual commemorative ceremony is being performed at the Pravasi Ghat and the 2<sup>nd</sup> November has now been declared as a public holiday. The Government of Mauritius will present the Pravasi Ghat project to UNESCO for inclusion in the list of world heritage sites.

Distinguished delegates, no social progress is possible if the nation feels insecure in its identity. The pacific coexistence of a culturally-diverse Mauritian society has been the bedrock foundation of our economic success. Over the past two decades, the Mauritian economy has undergone profound changes. We have progressed into a diversified manufacturing and services hub; we have developed into a top-class tourist destination and a dynamic financial services centre; and now we are determined to transform Mauritius into a cyber island.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the commitment of the Indian Government and especially to Prime Minister Vajpayee for extending the appropriate financial, technological, and human resource assistance to Mauritius in realizing this goal.

Distinguished delegates, before ending, allow me to say a few words in Hindi:

*"Bharat rupi vishal ped se alag hokar alag-alag deshon mein humne apna ek sansar basaya. Mein yeh gham na karoonga ki apni sanskriti aur apni pehchaan ko banaye rakhte hue ek aise mulk ko tarashe hum sab milkar apne sapno ko sakar kar sake. Aaj kaa yug khali pratispardha ka hai. Mujhe vishwas hai ki hum sab milkar apne apne liye pragati aur khushhali ke naye marg banayenge."*

Distinguished delegates, while we did not have control on our past, we certainly hold the future in our hands, which is now left to us to shape our own future. We have to chart out our own road map if we want to succeed in today's highly-competitive world. For this, we have to unite our forces; we have to create the right synergies; we have to build on our strengths; and we have to overcome our shortcomings. I am confident that we have the political will as well as the courage to do so. I sincerely hope that from this confluence of minds will emerge a roadway that will lead the Indian diaspora towards achieving social and economic progress for themselves and for the countries where they are settled.

I thank you for your attention.

## Inaugural Address by Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India

Mauritius ke Pradhan Mantri Mahamahim Shri Anerood Jugnauth, Vishwa Bharati Parivar ke Vishisht Pratinidhigan: Aap sab ko mera vandana hai, su swagatam. Many of you are citizens of your adopted countries. Over 20 million of you have set up home in scores of countries near and far, but each one of you shares a common identity – your Indianness – and a common origin, this motherland of your forefathers. Therefore, this great gathering, which is the first of its kind, is truly a homecoming. It is also a grand occasion for the country to pay a tribute to its sons and daughters who have succeeded in reaching the pinnacle in so many diverse fields of human endeavour all over the world. There is yet another aspect of this unique celebration of the Pravasi Bharatiya's association with his land of origin. Many of you or your forefathers left India in search of fortune or a better livelihood. Today, India has itself become a land of opportunity. We want to share with our extended family our achievements, hopes concerns, aspirations, and goals. Your awareness of our current national course and understanding of our perspective would enrich your bonds with India and heighten your sense of belonging to the global Indian family. The odyssey of our people to the four corners of the globe has been a saga of courage, enterprise and character. In ancient times, our forefathers went to distant lands as traders, monks, teachers and temple builders. A century-and-a-half ago, Indian indentured labour was sent forth to sugar, tea, and rubber plantations in near and far-flung parts of the British Empire. They worked on lands as far apart as Fiji and Mauritius, Surinam and Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Burma, Guyana and Malaysia. The next wave of immigrants was into unchartered waters for unknown countries. Since the 70s, young Indian professionals have been migrating abroad to corporate boardrooms, research laboratories, engineering workshops, and university faculties. The immigration of doctors, nurses, engineers, managers, plumbers and electricians to West Asia and the Gulf has been a steady growth. Today, the success of every category of these immigrants all over the world testifies to the indomitable spirit, which they carried from the Indian soil. It is a tribute to their patience and forbearance in the face of hardship, rebuke and denial. It speaks of their dedication in chosen professions, overcoming various trials and tribulations. Friends, on this day, 88 years ago, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India after nearly 20 years as a Pravasi Bharatiya in South Africa. His struggle against discrimination, deprivation and exploitation of Indians in South Africa not only fired the imagination of Indian patriots, but it also inspired the spirit of freedom movements right across the African continent. Out of those freedom movements emerged Pravasi Bharatiya heroes like Shiv Sagar Ram Ghulam of Mauritius, Yusuf Dadu and Montinecker of South Africa, Chedi Jagan of Guyana, Jagannath Lakshman of Surinam, and many others. Not many people today remember the painful Camgatamaru episode of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when a boat load of six from India were most brutally left to fend for themselves on the high seas of the coast of Canada. Today, these very six are among the most prosperous Canadians and are increasingly influential in the Canadian politics and in Ujjwal Dosanj, we have honoured one such Canadian figure. Even the illiterate plantation labourers empowered succeeding generations through a determined pursuit of education. Sir Vidiadhar S Naipaul, Shri Anerood Jugnauth, Datu Samy, and millions of others are living symbols of the transformation of an oppressed community to leaders of society in the space of a few generations. Let us remember that unlike the British, the French, the Dutch and the Germans, India was never a maritime power. All the same, Indians ventured forth across the seas to set up new homes in lands. They went in peace often with nothing more than a faith in their destiny. No country can claim that Indians centred its territory in the spirit of colonialism. This also is a glorious tribute to you and your forefathers; few people who entered foreign lands can claim such a testimony.

Friends, Pandit Nehru once remarked that wherever there is an Indian, a bit of India goes with him. Pravasi Indians have truly taken India abroad – Indian culture, Indian



society and Indian traditions, not to mention Indian films and Indian cuisine. The outside world has also attracted the best Indian talents, skills, accessibilities like Amartya Sen and Jagdish Bhagwati, E C G Sudarshan and S Chandrashekar, Hargobind Khurana and Zubin Mehta. The Pravasi Bharatiya family today also includes Indian writers in English with an international readership; entrepreneurs and industrialists with a global reach-up of operations; management and all lifestyle gurus with a huge following; and film-makers, sportspersons, artists, and performers of great popularity. They have dramatically changed the world's perception of Indians and hence of India. They have provoked a new appreciation of land, which has produced and exported so many achievers. They have built bridges of understanding between the international community and India. The benchmarks for success, which the Pravasi community has set, are a challenge for us in India. They make us examine, why India is so much more innovative, productive and successful abroad than in his own country. They prod us to create business, investment and the economic climate, which is as conducive to success as anywhere else in the world. I assure you that we are fully committed to creating such an environment in India. We are modernizing our infrastructure. Our telecom facilities are already as good as anywhere else in the world. The combination of India-based IT companies and Indian professionals abroad has made India a premier stopover. We are building world-class highways through our National Highway Development Project. Our rural roads and highway network are being upgraded. We have ambitious plans for airports, ports and railways. Housing construction has acquired an unprecedented speed. Literacy and especially women's literacy has registered a marked rise over the last decade.

We are aware of the slow progress in several areas of our social sector development, but we are determined to move faster than before. All in all, we are guided by the ambitious goal of making India a developed nation by 2020, free from all vestiges of poverty and full of opportunities for all our one billion people. We would like to create an environment in India which will make you want to return not just for sentimental or emotional reasons but in the conviction that you can excel in this country as much as you could anywhere else in the world. I believe that Pravasi Bharatiya can be a catalyst for rapid change in this direction. Each one of you, through your network of friends, relatives, and acquaintances, can create a strong urge for changes in India. Our collective attention needs to be rescued from the sterile controversies and trivial issues that dominate the headlines and focussed on the real task to be accomplished, so that India can go ahead with the developed world. At the same time, you can project the truth about India to the world in a credible and effective manner. Misleading, one-sided and negative pictures are often put out due to bias, ignorance, or design. Your familiarity with the Indian reality and with the perspectives of your adopted society, equip you to correct such misrepresentations. You could project a positive image of India not as propaganda but as a true reflection of the reality on the ground. For example, India continues to have one of the fastest-growing economies at a time when most developed economies have slowed down. Our exports grew by 19 per cent in spite of a global slowdown and strong rupee. Till recently, India needed to import food grains to feed its population. Last year, we exported food grains worth over 60 billion rupees to twenty-five countries. About a decade ago, we had to mortgage our gold to tide over a difficult balance-of-payments crisis. Today, we have record foreign exchange reserves of nearly 70 billion dollars. How often have we seen such facts quoted outside the country? It is far more likely that mindless political gossip or manipulated acts of crime and violence would dominate the headlines around the world. Friends, India has been deeply appreciative of the support of the Pravasi Bharatiya community at times of need. Whenever India has faced a challenge to its security or to its territorial integrity, you have tirelessly championed its cause and then when there was an effort to isolate India after our nuclear tests of 1998, you came forward to stand by India. Your enthusiastic response to our Resurgent India Bonds in 1998 helped us raise over 4 billion dollars when we needed it the most. Many of you have *been* generously helping

the schools, colleges, IITs, and universities as their grateful alumnus. I commend this gesture of guru dakshina.

Some of you have met me with interesting suggestions on how to extend the scope of Pravasi Bharatiya involvement in the development of India's educational infrastructure. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has also taken some initiatives in this direction since education is going to be one of the main competitive strengths of India in the emerging knowledge society. Let us work together to see the opportunity. In this context, I will take the liberty of offering a word of advice. The Indian community abroad often reflects the diversity, which is the hallmark of our society here. We are proud of this diversity whether it is linguistic, religious or regional groupings like the Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi and Marathi associations which serve a useful purpose in preserving linguistic skills and regional cultures. But it is also necessary to strengthen the broader Indian identity in the country of your residence. When you are united as Indians, your voice carries greater weight both for highlighting issues of your concern in your host country and for promoting Indian causes. This is a truth of great long-term significance for Indian communities everywhere. I have always been conscious of the needs for India to be sensitive to the hopes, aspirations, and concerns of the vast diaspora. It is like a parental charge. It is also an obligation derived from our civilizational heritage. It was with this perspective that we set up a high-level committee headed by Dr Lakshmi Mal Singhvi to examine all matters relating to the interaction of the community with India. I would like to congratulate Dr Singhvi and his colleagues for the thorough and exhaustive nature of their report. The idea of celebrating the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas annually flows from the recommendations of the Committee. The revised and improved scheme of PIO cards is also based on the ideas of the Committee.

Friends, Indians who have chosen to settle in foreign lands should be loyal to their country of adoption. The biggest challenge facing every immigrant community is to integrate harmoniously into the political, economic, and social life of the host society while preserving and cherishing its civilizational heritage. Over the years, Indians have achieved this delicate balance virtually everywhere without a contradiction between their adopted citizenship and their original Indian identity. It is in this background that my Government has decided to accept the high-level recommendation to permit dual citizenship for the people of Indian Origin living in certain countries. We are now working on the administrative regulations and procedures governing dual citizenship. We will introduce the necessary legislation during the budget session of Parliament. The NRI of today is the Pravasi Bharatiya of tomorrow. The welfare of NRIs in the Gulf region is of utmost concern to us. A compulsory insurance scheme for Indian workers migrating to this region will be unveiled shortly. Parliament is already considering a bill to establish a welfare fund for the overseas Indian workers. To meet the educational needs of children of the workers in the Gulf, we plan to reserve a certain proportion of seats in our academic institutions for the children of the Gulf NRIs.

Friends, in order to fulfil this agreement, we will continue to engage closely with the community of Indian origin. For this, we are setting up an advisory committee, which will meet periodically to suggest new initiatives to the Minister of External Affairs. We are prepared to respond to your expectations from India. We invite you not only to share our vision of India in the new millennium but also to help us shape its contours. We do not want only your investment, we also want your ideas. We do not want your riches, we want the richness of your experience. We can gain from the breadth of vision that your global exposure has given you. When you left the country, you carried with you the primary colours of Indian ethos. A cross-fertilization of cultures over time has added new shades to those of vibrant hues. Today, we invite you to brush in some of these new colours onto the ever-evolving canvas of India's development. Friends, I also want to say something in Hindi before I end this presentation.





## Vote of Thanks by Dr A C Muthiah, President, FICCI

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, Rt Hon'ble Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister, Shri L K Advani, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Shri Yashwant Sinha, Ministers of the Government of India, Parliamentarians, Dr L M Singhvi, Shri J C Sharma, Senior Government Officials, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I stand before you in awe. It is an amazing spectacle of a gigantic reunion cutting across sixty nations of the world with hearts of thousands of us throbbing in unison for our great motherland Bharat. I speak on behalf of the men and women who connect to the apex Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India, FICCI, in joint partnership with the Government of today, to celebrate what the Prime Minister of India has consecrated and dedicated the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. Sir, you had a dream, we had a dream and more than 20 million people of Indian origin had a dream. Today, on this hallowed 9<sup>th</sup> of January, these dreams are finally turning into a reality. Prime Minister's clarion call has brought us together from all corners of the globe to break bread together; to share our feelings together; and reach out to each other to discover newer identities, deeper connectivities and hitherto unexplored synergies. Arising out of these three historic days of intense confabulations at the cutting edge of knowledge, we wish to see a new awakening, a fresh integration with the Indian diaspora stretching across the fields of business, the domain of culture, literature, science, technology, humanities and services. This Global Summit will create shining networks of human capital; will create worldwide resource webs; will offer powerful mind shares, it will float win-win strategies which must yield sustainable and palpable results.

Towards this end, FICCI is creating an exclusive diaspora division, which will work in tandem with the permanent secretariat being set up by the Government of India for the diaspora. We shall be delighted to facilitate the interaction between the global Indian community and Indian business. Ladies and gentlemen, it is for us, the global Indian family, to create a new trajectory of history, which could return us to a rightful place in the comity of nations. I urge all of you to strongly acclaim once again the historic announcement by our Prime Minister of dual citizenship for the people of Indian origin of certain countries. Now, I deem it a great honour to move a vote of thanks on behalf of the Organizing Committee, led by Dr L M Singhvi, supported by Mr J C Sharma, guided by the Hon'ble Shri Yashwant Sinha, supported inevitably by Advaniji and of course inspired by the singular resolve of Atalji. May I, ladies and gentlemen, request you to support this vote of thanks with a heartiest, warmest, and loudest acclamation of joy and good guiding?

Before I conclude, may I request the delegates to forgive us, the organizers, if there have been any shortcomings on our part.