

## NRI PULSE

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# Community Unites To Observe Indian Republic Day

BY VIREN MAYANI

Atlanta: The 60th Indian Republic Day celebration was elegantly hosted by IACA 2010 Executive Team in Smyrna, GA for all Diaspora members that had gathered on Tuesday January 26th despite the freezing cold and a work evening. About a hundred patriotic attendees were present on time and many of them participated in the free H1N1 flu-shot clinic managed by Neeta Patel, sponsored by Kroger.

Atlanta's young and trendy Ms Ferrina Prashar competently emceed the event and commenced the program by welcoming everyone and quizzing them about India's Constitution. Dedicated community members: Krishnaveni Kesavarapu organized the short but pertinent cultural program, and also led the rendering of "Vande Matram". Several people participated in the program, including Laxmi Vedala.

The Indian flag was hoisted by IACA's champion; Dr. Prakash Desai's mother Smt. Lilyben Desai, a veteran freedom fighter. Lilyben was born in 1918 and was involved with the Independence movement since age 19 as a volunteer in Haripura Congress Convention with Netaji Subhashchandra Bose. Liked by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, she spent two weeks as a volunteer at the Annual Congress convention in Bardoli. Her best friend during that time was Indira Gandhi. A political prisoner who was sent to Sabarmati Jail for the 1940 Freedom movement, she was jailed again in 1941 in Yaravada, Pune, for a total of 4 months. She married Late Shri Vasantrao Desai; a political activist, who left medical school to become a freedom fighter for Mother India. Mr. Desai was also incarcerated for the Independence struggle spending close to four years in jail. Since his passing away in 1984, Lilyben lives with her daughter-in-law Dr. Usha Desai and her only son, Dr. Prakash Desai, after whose birth she left political activities to raise him.

The flag hoisting was followed by the singing of the Indian and American National Anthems by all attendees.

Vice Chairman, Tushar Sanghvi gave his remarks followed by Festival of India promoter and IACA Board member; Chand Akineni. He spoke about the need and planned use of the India Center, one half of the IACA organization whilst Dr. Niranjana Dave; President-Elect Sanatan Mandir, shared details about the Mandir; the other equal half of IACA. Laxmi and Krishnaveni's singing interlaced the spoken words but the highlight of the entertainment was Guruswamy, also known as "Reverse Gear". The performer has a unique talent, rendering songs in reverse order. The audience roared in uncontrollable laughter for his performance but sobered down at the end with his patriotic rendition of "Kar chale hum fida". IACA's 2010 Executive Team member and Treasurer, Samir Doshi issued the vote of thanks. Kudos go out to: all present for their support, Kroger for their community participation, Nikhil Shirke for gathering the various community leaders, Krishnaveni and Laxmi for managing the cultural elements, Reverse Gear for being the entertainment highlight, Ferrina for emceeding, Haveli Marietta for the sponsored refreshments, Mustafa Ajmeri for making and serving hot masala tea and most importantly: Smt Lilyben for honoring the community in hoisting the flag. To showcase solidarity: Madhu Tata and his entire executive team from Telugu Association of Metro Atlanta (TAMA), Greater Atlanta Tamil Sangam (GATS) President Smt. Indra Balakrishnan, Maharashtra Mandal Atlanta (MMA) President Vaibhav Sathe, Punjabi Association Leader and IACA's Board member Vir Nanda et al; were

present throughout the program. A young group of party bashers showed poor judgment in carelessly helping themselves to the food and drinks, consuming and wasting most of it whilst the others were enjoying the program. One wonders how even an event like the Republic Day celebrations cannot contain our young and the restless. The program concluded on time and with a refreshing scene of all community members enjoying the savories together. The collective effort by the community in recognizing and observing India's Republic Day festivities was a super success. IACA 2010 team has a lot more of these goodies in store this year. The North South Foundation will be conducting an all day workshop for Spelling, Geography and Math Bee at IACA on Feb 27th. IACA will also host a "Drama and Dinner" with Sarkar's presentation of an English comedy "Out of Order" besides many more interesting events. IACA 2010: Engage\* Evolve\* Entertain.



**Top: (L-R) IACA 2010 Executive VP Viren Mayani, Dr. Prakash Desai, Smt Lilyben Desai, IACA 2010 President Padma Rallapalli, VP Jeet Thakkar & Board member Chaitanya Bhatt. Bottom: IACA 2010 Secretary Shridhar Ranganathan felicitating Reverse Gear. Photos by Samir Doshi.**



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