



Multicultural DIWALI @ Fed Square

BY COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

The team of Celebrate India presented the much-awaited Diwali festival in the city of Melbourne with a program spreading over 9 days of celebrations. The buzz started in the city with the Diwali banners and a 5 days long Film Festival at Fed Square with a sponsorship of Mitu Bowmick of Mind Blowing Films (thank you Mituji) along with dances at the NGV and Flinders Street station attended by thousands. This year city saw a horse carriage decorated with lights and Indian music for Diwali, spreading the awareness of the upcoming festival. The Westpac bank windows at the city square and 9 days of Diwali decorations at the Melbourne Airport were breathtaking with a colourful temple, large banners, announcements of Diwali wishes as well as dance performances were thrilling all outgoing passengers. For a while one can be forgiven for thinking that they are in India not in Melbourne.

The Diwali celebrations on 10th Nov were as big and entertaining as expected and crowd was equally supportive as they turn in droves.

The efforts of Celebrate India to include the wider community were evident from the onset as there were so many non Indian families lining up to get inside the Art Play's marquee to learn the Indian craft making or get face painted. The jugglers, magician, stilt walkers and the mascots of Richmond football club, Cricket Victoria teams added charm and feel of a fairy day.



The Multicultural Bazaar was a great improvement while the food stalls were as innovating and well managed. On the down side, crowd was so large that some time you had to wait for more than 30 minutes to be served but was well taken by all as we felt that they were there to enjoy the day.

The program was very entertaining and well presented by the team led by the festival coordinator, Mr Arun Sharma along with Jaya Sharma & Dr. Virendra Berera and their teams.

It was very appropriate to observe the loss of our CG, Dr Behera with a minute of silence. "He was very closely associated and advising us throughout the preparation time", as Mr Sharma pointed out to Beyond India. "It was a difficult day for us to manage", he said.

The drive to take oath for No violence against Women was also truly great initiative by Celebrate India whose chairman, Mr Sharma is also an Ambassador for the White Ribbon. How nice to see the Indian community taking a lead in such serious issue facing our community?

The Indian troupe of Sid Goma was entertaining and amazed all with their Hindi singing and African looks while fusion dance

of Indian dancers with Chinese group and Salvadorian dancers were presented with a very graceful style. The variety was complete with the items like Tabla ensemble, Pagri competition conducted by Mr. Goyal of Rajasthani Kutumb and Bollywood dances by some local talents. I was informed by the organisers that the live band would have been more entertaining if they were able to present their full items which had to be interrupted due to recitative sound hiccups. Beside that all items were absorbing, entertaining and no one realised when 9 hours of non stop program had concluded. And it surely concluded with a bang of spectacular fireworks at the Yarra.

The chairman of Celebrate India, Mr Arun Sharma proudly informed that 70 items were presented on the day while managed by a team of no more than 50 hardworking Diwali team members, which was praised by the Premier of Victoria and opposition leader. Hon Bill Shorten, Represented the Prime Minister while Hon Kevin Andrews, represented the Federal Leader of Opposition, Tony Abbott giving Diwali message to the Indian community.

Other VIPs present were Vic-



torian Minister Hon. Nick Kotsiros, MPs Hon Hong Lim, Natalie Hutchins, Jude Perera and Counsel General of Nepal, El Salvador, Chile and Cr Ken Ong Melbourne City Councillor.

I have been informed that over 60,000 visited the Diwali celebrations @ fed Square this year and this makes it the largest Diwali celebrations in Australia while the reach over 9 days is still larger and worth commending

to the team of Celebrate India. The program of Diwali was concluded at the Melbourne Airport on 12th Nov with more celebrations, dances and sweet distributions.

Beyond INDIA Team wishes Celebrate India organisers and entire team in putting up so much of efforts by taking out their precious time from their busy working schedule for organising such a GRAND Diwali Festival.