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Hundreds gather for India's Independence Day celebrations in London

Heavy security was in place outside the India House as families, including young children, queued to join in the festivities.



PTI

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Artists perform during the 78th Independence Day celebrations at India House, in London, Thursday, Aug. 15, 2024. Credit: PTI Photo

London: Nearly 1,000 people of Indian heritage gathered at the High Commission of India here on Thursday to celebrate the 78th Independence Day, with music, dance and patriotic chants.

Indian High Commissioner to the UK, Vikram Doraiswami, marked the beginning of the event by unfurling the tricolour followed by the National Anthem echoing across India House in Aldwych.

He then read excerpts from President Droupadi Murmu's address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day -- a custom at the annual festive gathering.

"It's always a delight and, in a sense, a privilege to host as many of our expatriate citizens, as well as, friends of India from the overseas citizens community here in London. Today's turnout was genuinely more than we had expected," Doraiswami told PTI.

"It all worked really well. People were in really good spirits, and I think the President's message hit the right tone with its discourse about equity, inclusion and the idea of an India where the growth of political democracy is linked with the strengthening of social democracy. A very good message to land today and I think the audience really enjoyed it," he said.

Reflecting on the India-UK relationship, the envoy noted that the bilateral partnership is in a "very good place" in a year that witnessed general elections in both democracies.

"It's increasingly visible that on both sides the relationship is seen to be of central importance in the foreign policy construct. There is, in other words, a bipartisan consensus around the idea of strong India-UK relations in both countries," he added.

The festivities included a special Bharatanatyam performance by Guru Kanaka Srinivasan's troupe -- a curtain-raiser to their show at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on Friday, and renditions of 'Vande Mataram' and 'Sare Jahan Se Acha' on the bansuri by flautist Gaurav Uniyal.

Heavy security was in place outside the India House as families, including young children, queued to join in the festivities.

On Wednesday evening, the Indian High Commission hosted another annual event to commemorate "Partition Horrors Remembrance Day", a solemn gathering of community leaders reflecting on some of the painful memories of the Partition.

"This is an attempt by all of us to never forget what happened in that era... We need to recognise that what happened should have been an aberration in our larger history in South Asia; that the notion of what unites us should always be greater than what divides us," Doraiswami said in his address.

The event included a creative view of the way the film industry dealt with the tragedy of Partition by filmmaker Lalit Mohan Joshi and some iconic poems on the subject read out by Sanskrit scholar Shiv Kant Sharma.

The event concluded with a Carnatic violin recital by Aparna Raguraman followed by the guests exploring a photographic exhibition commemorating one of the biggest mass displacements in history.