

Dear members

The India Association is the oldest Indian community organization in Hong Kong and has been active in community, social and arts events over a period of 72 years. We benefit from the guidance and support of our patron the Consul General Mrs Priyanka Chauhan and our Honorary Adviser Mr Gary Harilela as we build on the hard work of our other patron Mr Bob Harilela. At this juncture, I would also like to thank Mrs Purviz Shroff and Mr Harry Banga who have been steadfast friends of this Association in terms of generously supporting our events.

However, in a year which has been the most unusual and challenging in recent memory, not just in Hong Kong but worldwide, it is an understatement to say that our ambitions have exceeded what has been possible. Not once but twice, I worked together with my diligent colleagues on the Executive Committee to organise a major event for members only to find that the public health situation did not allow for this. Nevertheless, it would be remiss of me not to thank our collective lucky stars that we live in this fantastic city. Not being able to organise social events is a very small price to pay for the health and safety of ourselves and loved ones.

Despite the challenging environment, we have managed to participate in a number of activities, most of which are consistent with our focus in recent years on advocacy for the interests of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, particularly in the areas of education, employment, health and immigration. I would mention in particular the following

- 1) Participating in a Policy Address Consultation Session on 22 September 2020 and following up with a letter to the Chief Executive dated 30 September 2020 making policy recommendations in relation to language difficulties facing Hong Kong's Non-Chinese communities, use of technology in teaching Chinese in schools and actions which could be taken to improve labour force participation and racial integration in Hong Kong.
- 2) Lobbying the Administration in relation to the return of Hong Kong residents stranded in India as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and interacting with the Food & Health Bureau and the Security Bureau in relation to quarantine arrangements for returnees.
- 3) Meeting with Mr Patrick Nip, the Secretary for the Civil Service on 30 October 2020 to discuss suggestions to remove language and other barriers that prevent members of ethnic minorities from contributing their talents in government jobs.
- 4) Organising flu and pneumococcal shots for the elderly in our community on 10 November 2020, 26 November 2020 and 26 January 2021
- 5) Updating guidance to members on action they need to take to protect right of abode status for their children born in Hong Kong in a letter issued on 16 February 2021.
- 6) Continued partnership with Dr Prasanna Neelakantan of the HKU Dental Faculty in relation to provision of dental services to members of non-Chinese communities in Hong Kong and participation in a Dental Fair Zoom webinar on 23 June 2020.
- 7) Liaising with Ms. Chinali Patel, consul at the local British consulate in relation to her proposals for mentoring in particular ethnic minority women in Hong Kong, including a meeting with the Executive Committee on 4 March 2021.
- 8) Participation in the International Mother Language Day event on 21 February 2021 organised by The Hong Kong Telugu Samakhya.

In addition to these specific meetings we have throughout the year had extensive interaction with respect to other organisations working on ethnic minority issues including the Federation of Ethnic Communities of which this Association is a founder member, the Jockey Club with respect to the its C-for-Chinese curriculum and Manoj and Geetanjali Dhar of Integrated Brilliant Education Limited.

We have also actively participated in the activities of the Council of Hong Kong Indian Associations (“CHIA”)

It goes without saying that this is a team effort and I would like to thank each and every executive committee member for the efforts that they bring to bear for the benefit of the Association and its objectives.

I am grateful for the advice and input of Arun Nigam in his capacity as the immediate past president.

I would like to play tribute to Mohan Chugani and Anita Gidumal who together with Vijay Harilela and I have worked very closely on issues affecting Hong Kong’s non-Chinese communities.

I am grateful for the contributions of Notan Tolani and Nanu Lachman who have rightly ensured balance and focus on the fact that we are an Indian Association committed to preserving our culture and heritage.

I am thankful for Ramesh Mahtani spearheading our charitable efforts, Richard Albuquerque for keeping us on track financially, Kavi Khiytani for performing the essential but sometimes thankless task of being the Association’s Honorary Secretary and Ram Ramadasan and Raj Manik for their constant support at Association events.

When the world returns to some normality, we will be able to recommence member events and the Happy Hour drinks which have typically been taken care of by the very competent duo of Kamal Nankani and Tony Alhuwalia.

Finally I would like to thank our co-op Executive Committee member Preeti Wadhwa for keeping us connected to the local cricket scene and to our secretarial assistant Yusuf Mohideen.

That concludes my report on the Association’s activities, I am proud of what we have achieved in a difficult year but am looking forward to better times ahead.