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DIWALI FESTIVAL IN YOK

Prayers aimed to help lift darkness of 3/11 tragedy

By Ryuko Hira

Honorary President of the Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama (IMAY)

The combined width and depth of all the world's oceans is insufficient to contain the tears and tragedies of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The trauma and pain of injuries, losses of innocent lives and, above all, young widowed women and little orphaned children are full of sorrow. Losses, sorrow, turmoil and disappointments are symbols of darkness.

To get rid of this darkness, one has to usher in the light of prosperity through "Adi Shakti," the primordial energy force in every human being.

This energy is termed "Om," which permeates and animates the physical world of matter. It is the power of vibration, or "Prana Shakti." The life force, "Bhuva," activates every part of the human body. The goddess Mahalakshmi, also known as Kwanyin in Chinese and Kanon-sama



Ryuko Hira

in Japanese, symbolizes this power. The Mahalakshmi principle accounts for good, happy and auspicious happenings in the world. The goddess is the presiding deity of the Dipavali (Diwali) Festival.

Dipavali is the festival of one's own inner illumination. On this day we light thousands of lamps with a single lamp. Today, we light many candles in our hearts with the flame of a single candle to pray for each and every victim of the Great East Japan Earthquake, so those who lost their noble lives, may rest their souls in eternal peace. May those victims who have been separated, or are lost or missing, soon meet their loved ones. May those who have lost homes and jobs have their wishes fulfilled soon.

On this holy festival of Dipavali, we earnestly pray that the darkness of difficulties, sorrow and tragedies of the Tohoku area will be resolved through the illumination of wisdom, powerful determination and courage bestowed by the divine blessings of Mahalakshmi.

The year 2011 commemorates the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama. On the occasion of the Dipavali Festival we express our deepest gratitude to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, the people and government of Japan,



Diwali Festival dancing

and especially to Kanagawa Prefecture and Yokohama for extending their support and cooperation for nine decades.

Dipavali is a lesson of light and love. Forgive and overcome the bondage of boundaries and walls. Move out, clasp, expand, in one limitless flow of love. Light the lamps and illuminate your hearts with love to selflessly serve our afflicted sisters and brothers in Tohoku.

An Indian sage, Sri Sathya Sai Baba says: "Charity is the true ornament for the hand. Service to man is service to God. Manava Seva-Madhava Seva."

The true illumination of the Dipavali Festival is to LOVE ALL AND SERVE ALL.

Diwali for joy, goodwill

By Alok Prasad
Ambassador of India

I am happy to learn that Indian Community in Yokohama will be celebrating Deepavali (Diwali) at Yamashita Park, Yokohama, on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 15-16.

Deepavali, the festival of lights, brings a message of joyous celebration as well as goodwill and prosperity.

This underlying message is even more significant this year as Japan recovers from the devastating effects of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

This will be an occasion for the Indian community and friends of India in Japan to express goodwill and solidarity with each other.

I wish the celebrations every success and convey my best wishes to the Indian community and friends of India in Japan on this occasion.



Alok Prasad

IMAY/ICCJ evacuation of Indian citizens recalled

Immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, members of the Shadan Hojin (SH) Indian Merchants Associations of Yokohama (IMAY/ICCJ) arranged to evacuate about 30 to 40 Indian nationals residing in the Tohoku region, including children and pregnant women.

The evacuees were met at Tokyo Station by IMAY/ICCJ members and escorted to IMAY Hall Yokohama. Bedding was provided during their stay from March 15 to 17, as well as hot Indian meals cooked at homes and in restaurants, Indian tea and early-morning breakfast. IMAY/ICCJ members also helped them in communicating for booking with Air India and solve passport problems with the Indian Embassy in Tokyo.

After arriving in Yokohama, for their peace of mind, the Indians from Tohoku prayed in Sathya Sai Baba temple—located on the first



Courtesy of Jagdish Khemani.

Indian evacuees in Sathya Sai Baba temple located on the first floor of the IMAY Hall in Yokohama

floor of the IMAY hall—thanking God for their safe evacuation.

The group was taken to Yokohama City Air



Courtesy of Jagdish Khemani.

Indian evacuees from Tohoku take shelter on the second floor of the IMAY Hall in Yokohama before leaving for India.

Terminal on March 17, the first step on their eventual departure for India from Narita Airport.