

Remarks by Ambassador Pavan Kapoor

Shaheed Diwas

&

Launch of India@75 Celebrations in the UAE

23 March 2021

Namaste/Salam Alaikuom,

Mr. N.K. Ramachandran Menon, Chairman of Bhavans,

Middle East;

Mr. Sooraj Ramachandran, Vice-Chairman;

Ms. Girija Baiju, Principal, Bhavans, Abu Dhabi;

Management and Teachers of Bhavans Middle East,

Members of the Indian diaspora who have joined us on this event

today and dear friends,

I am very pleased to address this virtual programme today as we observe 'Shaheed Diwas' in the UAE to pay homage to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, and, of course, many other well-known and countless other unknown martyrs and freedom fighters, who made the supreme sacrifice for our motherland during our long struggle for independence.

It was on this fateful day as you just heard in 1931 that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were executed in Lahore for their

revolutionary actions against the British empire. But as Shaheed Bhagat Singh rightly said, and I quote, “They may kill me, but they cannot kill my ideas. They can crush my body, but they will not be able to crush my spirit.” Unquote. Longings and efforts of fellow Indians for freedom grew stronger and stronger even after the execution of these shaheeds and eventually succeeded in getting rid of the yoke of the mighty British Empire on 15 August 1947.

While there were different paths chosen by freedom fighters in India, and their merits have been debated at length by many scholars, we should cherish the contribution of every daughter and son of India to this cause irrespective of the means employed. On this solemn occasion, let us pay tribute to all our freedom fighters, for their sufferings and selfless sacrifice that ensured that our future generations enjoy freedom and peace, and live a life of dignity.

As you may all be aware, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ or India@75 celebrations on 12 March 2021 in India and you just heard the Principal, Mrs. Baiju talked about the fact that it was by flagging a ‘Padyatra’ or a ‘freedom march’ from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad launched this event.

For the benefit of all our young participants, I should explain that the ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ popularly know as ‘Amrit Mahotsav’ is the name given to our planned India@75 celebrations, which will have a series of cultural events, organized by the Government of India to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India’s Independence. Even though the actual anniversary will fall on 15 August 2022, the celebrations have been launched by our Prime Minister on 12 March 2021 or exactly 75 weeks before the 75th anniversary. The India@75 celebrations or the ‘Amrit Mahotsav’ will be celebrated till 15 August 2023 as a ‘Jan-Utsav’ or a ‘celebration

of the people' and these celebrations will be inspired by five pillars as a guiding force. These pillars are 'Freedom Struggle', 'Achievements at 75', 'Ideas at 75', 'Actions at 75' and 'Resolves at 75'.

I am happy to announce today the formal launch of the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' here in the UAE, on this occasion of 'Shaheed Diwas' as a befitting tribute to freedom fighters of India. This, of course, relates directly and appropriately to the first pillar mentioned, namely, the Freedom Struggle. But starting from today, the Embassy of India in Abu Dhabi and our Consulate in Dubai will regularly organize events and digital initiatives based on themes around all the five pillars, in the build up towards the 75th anniversary of our Independence on 15 August, 2022.

India achieved independence due to the collective efforts of many great people and the India@75 celebrations are also aimed to cherish our hard earned freedom. As mentioned, the Government of India aspires to make the 'Amrit Mahotsav' a collective celebration for all fellow Indians as I said a 'Jan Utsav'. We, therefore, urge all the 3.4 million Indians residing here in the UAE to come forward and partner with us in the Embassy of India in Abu Dhabi and our Consulate in Dubai in participating and organizing such events in the weeks and months ahead. We will also work towards organizing the 'Week of Indian Culture' all over the UAE sometime next year, by which time hopefully there will also be much greater in-person participation possible at events. The details of all forthcoming activities of the India@75 celebrations will be shared in advance through our website, social media platforms and local print and digital media. Of course, the word of mouth which I hope will begin today through all of those who are participating today, will also help reinforce and spread this message. But we are now looking forward to get the overwhelming support of our large Indian community in the UAE, as well as various Indian community associations, Indian business houses and most importantly the

younger generation of thousands of Indian students who are residing in the UAE. Come and celebrate with us the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my thanks to Mr. Ramachandran Menon, Mr. Sooraj Ramachandran, Ms. Girija Baiju, Mr. Suresh Balakrishnan, as well as teachers and students of the Private International English School or Bhartiya Vidya Bhavans School, Abu Dhabi, for working with us to organise this programme to commemorate Shaheed Diwas today. And of course, I would like to thank all of you who have joined us today on this very important occasion.

Namaste

Jai Hind