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Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri making his opening remarks at the reception marking the opening of the exhibition 'Humanitas - Images of India' by Fredric Roberts (left)



Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General for UN Women, admiring a photograph, flanked by Amb. Puri, and Fredric Roberts.

Marking India's Presidency of UNSC by celebrating everyday Indians

Ambassador Hardeep Puri, India's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, hosted a reception August 8 in the General Assembly building, at the opening of an exhibition 'Images of India' by an award-winning photographer. India has the prestige of presiding over the UN Security Council this month.



Prof. John Humbach admiring a photograph by Fredric Roberts.



Photos: Xitij Joshi



Ranju and Ravi Batra, Federal Distt Judge George Daniels, Lakshmi Puri, Jamaica's PR to UN Amb. Raymond, and Adm. Justice Sylvia Hinds-Radix.



Lakshmi Puri, PR Hardeep Puri, Ranju Batra, Surrogate Judge Gigante, Ravi Batra, Justice Schneier, Congressman Gregory Meeks, Sen. Huntley, Justice Tingling, Justice Aliotta, NY Senate Democratic Leader Sen. John Sampson, Neal Batra.



Ravi Bhooplapur, Kamlesh Mehta, Amb. Puri, Dr J. Ganesh Bhat, Lakshmi Puri, Ranju and Ravi Batra, and businessman Jack Rosen.

Celebrating India's Presidency of Security Council

By Parveen Chopra

United Nations: To mark India's Presidency of the United Nations Security Council, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, hosted a reception at the General Assembly complex here for the diplomatic corps, US lawmakers and prominent Indian community members to coincide with the opening of the exhibition 'Humanitas - Images of India' by award winning US photographer Fredric Roberts.

Amb. Puri told the august gathering that after he discovered Roberts' exquisite photographs of India, he'd promised to organize his show at the UN during India's month-long presidency of the UNSC. Puri also recommended him to the Indian government, which honored Roberts as Best Foreign Photographer for India earlier this year.

Puri noted that most of his fellow Permanent Representatives (PRs) of other countries were out of New York on vacation (the ones who attended included PRs of Sri Lanka, Netherlands, South Africa, Belgium and Jamaica). So he invited to the rostrum eminent attorney Ravi Batra, who in turn invited and introduced quite a few judges and New York politicians.

When asked to speak, Roberts alluded to the fulsome praise by Indians of his photographs in the



Neil Batra, Ranju Batra, Pakistan's Deputy PR Raza Bashir Tarar, Hardeep and Lakshmi Puri, NY Senate Leader John L. Sampson and Ravi Batra. (Photos: Xitij Joshi/xitijphoto.com)

show and said it was like "being recognized as a doctor by other doctors, and not merely parents blinded with pride".

Talking to the SATimes, Roberts said the photographs on show were culled from what he shot on his visits to Rajasthan in 2003 and Gujarat in 2006.

The Los Angeles based investment banker turned photographer said he had been travelling on business to India since 1974 but started taking photographs since 2000. Others go to India looking for the poverty, the misery, but Roberts said he is enchanted by the majesty of India, particularly in its villages, in people's family, community and religious life. "These villagers may not have money but they are rich, because he who is happy with what he has is rich."

Yet, Roberts agreed that that India is vanishing--so his art-

work has the unintended value of serving as an archive of a culture. He has recently set up the Fredric Roberts Photography Workshop for Indian students in conjunction with Sanjhi, an Udaipur based NGO focused on environmental issues.

'Humanitas' (Humanitas means the development of human virtue in all its forms, to its fullest extent) will remain on show at the UNGA till Aug 19, and from Sept 8 - Oct 1 at Sundaram Tagore Gallery in Manhattan.



Rachel Knipel, Justice Knipel, Justice Deborah Dowling, and Justice Schneier.



Ranju and Ravi Batra with Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri, India's Deputy PR to the UN.

"The world is safer with India on UNSC"

Eminent Attorney RAVI BATRA on the central message of India's service on the Security Council.

After nearly 20 years, India sits on the Security Council and for the month of August, presides over it. In those 20 years, India has not only become a "strategic partner" of the US but also "Incredible India!" That India has at this precious moment in history Amb. Hardeep Puri as its Permanent Representative seems to now be a benefit to not only India, but to the world itself as India's system-rich maturity is on great display as the Arab Spring has turned into a troubled, and perhaps, bubbling, "Summer".

That Ambassador Puri, while presiding over the Security Council during the normally "relaxed" month of August, happens to be dealing with Syria while avoiding the then latent pitfalls of rushing into Libya when the Arab Spring was still a spring is awe-inspiring as it makes the Council more powerful. The body of work during this rotational presidency is being appreciated beyond expectations with Amb. Puri's graduated and calibrated course of action gives the world community, including the Council, more options, and hence, more power and more relevance. If there is a central message of India's service on the UNSC, it is that the world is safer with India on it, as each crisis is better addressed and world expectations better calibrated.

What was unique about the celebration of India's presidency of the



Ravi Batra was called to the podium by Amb Puri.

Security Council was Amb. Puri's desire to have a low-key event, which celebrated everyday Indians in India, captured by the affectionate lens of Fredric Roberts rather than some high level event focusing on the UN or the Council. One would normally think that India and her happy PR would have wanted a "loud" self-congratulatory event; instead, it was a quiet, dignified, happy event focused on everyday culture, rich and tradition soaked rural Indians; almost as if being on the Security Council on a permanent basis or its presidency is now to be expected naturally and is no big deal. Indeed, those present at the exhibition seemed to think so.

In the global community present at the UN, it is now expected of India, because of her team led by PR Puri, to have great substance, great

follow through, great interpersonal relationships, great attention to detail and especially, great value added to the discussion, subject, content, tone and outcome with greater consensus; but, always, in a low key manner, consistent with one used to wielding power, carefully, for the greater good. Those accustomed to power's proper use intimately know the infinite calibrations of power, and that in the calibration itself, is power.

The great American philosopher, Mark Twain, if present at the Fredric Roberts exhibition, would have declared to all present: Don't ever expect India to crack walnuts with the great seal of the SC, for it is a real prince who presides. As the majesty of America comes from its everyday people, so is it true for India.



Ravi Batra, Justice Zweibel, PR Puri, Justices Schneier and Knipel.



Dr Harbans Gulati, Dr Subhash Gulati, Vikas Dhall, Willie Rapfogel, and Kamlesh Mehta.