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Kabul joins the family of ICCR's cultural centres



From right to left: Afghanistan's Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Karim Khurram and Vice-President of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Dr. Syed Shahid Mandi light the lamp at the inauguration of India Cultural Centre (ICC). Also seen in the picture are Minister Sandeep Kumar (at the mike) with ICCR Director General Pavan K. Varma and Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood.

evening of September 14 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the cultural relations between India Afghanistan, with the formal inauguration of an India Cultural Centre (ICC) at the Indian Embassy.

As per Indian custom and tradition, Afghanistan Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Karim Khurram, Vice-President of Indian Council for

Cultural Relations (ICCR) Syed Shahid Mahdi, and Director General of ICCR Pavan K. Varma and Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood lit the ceremonial lamp at the inaugural in Kabul.

Welcoming the Indian initiative in establishing ICC, Khurram said: "Afghanistan and India share multi-dimensional relations with special attachment to the cultural aspects. The establishment of the ICC would go a

Afghan students with Ustad Inder Singh Bawra (centre) performing at the inauguration of India Cultural Centre

> further promoting cultural ties." Talking about his ministry's efforts to promote Afghan culture, Khurram assured ICC of all cooperation from the government of Afghanistan.

> Mahdi spoke fondly about the close historical ties between the two countries.

> "Both countries drew heavily from each other's culture and immensely benefited from such cultural exchanges. ICC is a natural step

forward in this regard," he

ICC in Kabul has already become a popular venue for many Afghanis and members of the international community, who turn up in large numbers there to learn yoga and music.

Hardly a few weeks old at the ICC, Afghan students of music gave an impressive rendition of Sargam Dhun and Sufi compositions of eminent poet Amir Khusro.

Their performance set the tone and tenor for the evening's piece de resistance by wellknown Indian ghazal singer Satish Babbar and his group.

Specially flown in by ICCR for this occasion, Babbar and his entourage began with classical bandish in Raag Bhimplasi — Sada Rangji, and followed up with traditional ghazals and compositions of famous poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sufi Tabbassum.