

Independence Day celebrations in Kabul

Celebrating the 60th Independence Day of India, the Embassy of India held the traditional flag-hoisting ceremony on August 15 at the premises of the Embassy in Kabul. On this ceremonious occasion, Ambassador Rakesh Sood unfurled the National Flag and read out the President's speech delivered on the eve of Independence Day. Apart from the Mission's members, personnel working with various Indian assistance projects and other Indian nationals attended the function. Around 200 persons attended the ceremony.

Later in the evening, to celebrate the occasion, Ambassador Sood hosted a reception at India House. First Vice President H.E Ahmad Zia Masood graced the function. Chairman of the Misharano Jirga (Upper House) and Chief of the National Reconciliation Commission H.E. Hazrat Sebghatullah Mojaddidi, Speaker of Wolesi Jirga (Lower House), H.E Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, Foreign Minister H.E Dr. Spanta, Defence Minister, Minister for Agriculture, Finance Minister, Minister for Commerce and Industry, Minister for Energy and Water, Minister for Higher Education, and the



Ambassador Rakesh Sood reading out President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's address to the nation at an event to mark India's 60th Independence Day, at the Embassy of India in Kabul on August 15.

National Security Adviser were among the several dignitaries, who attended the function. Besides, several Deputy Ministers, eminent Afghan personalities and senior members of Diplomatic Corps were also present at the reception. Around 350 guests attend-

ed the reception.

Flag hoisting functions were also held at the Indian Consulates General in Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif to celebrate the 60th Independence Day of India. ■

Ustad Eltaf Sarahang performs at home after 20 years

As the long evening softly blended into the night, the melodious notes of the popular Amir Khusro composition of Raag Darbari Kanga, 'Yaar ai Man Biya Biya', woven by Ustad Eltaf Hussain Sarahang, resonated through the warm summer air, providing succour with its resonance, poise and purity. The enthralled audience, which included senior Government Ministers, MPs, Governors of some provinces, members of the royal family, members of the diplomatic community and international organisations, media, cultural personalities, and individual Afghan and Indian community members, expressed their appreciation by



Ambassador Sood introducing Ustad Eltaf Hussain Sarahang and his troupe

humming along the familiar melody in undertones with the maestro, accompanied by elaborate hand gestures.

The occasion was the first major music and ghazal performance in Afghanistan after 20 years by Ustad Eltaf Hussain Sarahang — one of the outstanding Afghan exponents today of Patiala gharana-gayaki — organised at India House on August 3.

Sarahang has three generations of musical heritage backing him. The credit of carrying the grandeur of Patiala gharana-gayaki to Afghanistan goes to his illustrious father, Ustad Muhammad Hussain Sarahang, Sartaj-e-Mausiqui, and grandfather, Ustad Ghulam Hussain Khan, who imparted an extraordinary dimension to this rich genre of music. During the war era, Sarahang was forced to abandon Afghanistan for India, where he stayed for 17 years and performed throughout the country and received numerous awards, including the prestigious Sangeet Kala Ratna (2003) and Sangeet Sameru (2005). Sarahang returned recently to Afghanistan to revive his links with the rich Afghan music traditions.

The Indian Embassy initiative in organising Sarahang's performance was seen as an empowerment of eminent artists in the restructuring of Afghanistan, who have had very limited opportunities to perform in their own country in recent years.

Performing on that evening on the sprawling lawns of the Indian Ambassador's residence, combining with ease the Indian Ragas Yaman, Kalayan and Malkonj with the Afghan Persian ghazals, Sarahang proclaimed that he felt that he had truly returned home. ■