

# Indian Embassy continue their dominance in Kabul Volleyball championship 2007



Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood and Russian Ambassador Zamir Kabulov with members of both teams and the rolling trophy



The final match between India and Russia in progress at India House.

**O**n November 16, the Indian Embassy team defeated the Russian Embassy team in the keenly contested final of the Kabul Volleyball Championship tournament of 2007 and retained the winners' trophy. The Indian team had won the inaugural championship in December 2006.

The Kabul Volleyball Championship was an initiative launched by the Indian Embassy aimed at promoting closer ties among the small and growing diplomatic community in Kabul.

At India House, members of the diplomatic missions participating in the tournament

gathered around the volleyball court while cheerleaders egged on their teams with much fervour.

In the best-of-five final, the first game set the tone for the battle royale between the two top teams of the tournament. With effective blocking and an attacking play, India maintained consistent pressure on the Russian team and won the first game at 25 to 17 points. The second game followed the pattern of the first one. Combining aggression with clever placements, the Indian team won the second game by 25 to 18 points.

With Russia losing two straight games, the third game became the decider for India to retain their championship title and for Russia to continue their fight for the trophy. With changes in their tactics, the Russian attack initially succeeded in penetrating the Indian defence. The decider became a "see-saw" tussle, with both teams matching point for point and fighting each point to the kill. Both teams then took "time out" and regrouped themselves.

However, the Indian team emerged the stronger one, winning the decider by 25 to 22 points, and retained the rolling trophy for the second consecutive year.

With two more embassies joining this year's competition, the volleyball championship is steadily gaining popularity among the diplomatic community.

The 2007 tournament began on September 28, featuring 10 teams from the embassies of the United States, Britain, Italy, Germany, Russia, Canada, Turkey, China, Japan and India.

Handing over the trophy to the winning Indian team, Russian Ambassador Zamir Kabulov praised the tournament as "an important initiative" and congratulated the Indian team.

Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood thanked all the participating teams in making the tournament a success and handed over T-shirts with the logo of the tournament, as a memento to members of all teams.

Though his team lost a second straight time in the finals to the same rival, Kabulov sportingly said, "We are going to make it next year".

Sanjeev Sachdeva, a key player in the Indian team, said, "With this victory, we are like the Australians in world cricket. Now, it is the other teams who have to catch up with us." ■