

Rep. Maloney addresses Indian consulate, pushes for commemorative Diwali stamp

BY A STAFF WRITER

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (NY-12) spoke before the Consul General of India, in New York, July 8 to urge its members and leaders in the Indian American communities to continue supporting an effort to get the Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) of the United States Postal Service (USPS) to issue a commemorative Diwali stamp.

"It is high time the USPS issues a Diwali stamp. Diwali, also known as the Holiday of Lights, marks the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and the beginning of the Hindu New Year. It is one of the oldest and most storied religious holidays in the world, and is celebrated by people of several faiths. There are commemorative stamps for Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Eid, and more. Issuing a Diwali stamp would officially recognize the size and significance of the country's Indian American population, which comprises over three million people, and would provide the USPS with sorely needed revenue," Congresswoman Maloney said.

For several years, Congresswoman Maloney has headed efforts in Congress to push the CSAC to consider issuing a commemorative Diwali stamp. In January, Congresswoman Maloney introduced H.Res. 47, expressing the sense of the U.S. House of Representatives that the CSAC should issue a Diwali stamp. She wrote letters to the CSAC in 2010 and 2012 requesting the same action.



Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney addresses a crowd at the Indian Consulate, in New York, to rally support for the issuance of a commemorative Diwali stamp

Ranju Batra, President of the Association of Indians in America – NY, who attended today's event at the Indian Consulate, is a close friend of Congresswoman Maloney's and was a major catalyst in the effort to get the Diwali stamp issued. She asked that Congresswoman Maloney provide national leadership on the effort, and Congresswoman Maloney obliged her request by remaining strongly dedicated to the issue.

Aside from the cultural significance of the Diwali stamp, there are economic benefits associated with its issuance. There are over

3 million Indian Americans residing in the United States and over 1 billion Indians living in India. The sale of the Diwali stamp could provide the USPS with a much-needed revenue surge.

Today's meeting was held to urge supporters and members of the Indian American communities to contact their members of Congress and the CSAC and express support for the issuance of a Diwali stamp. Supporters of the issuance of a Diwali stamp, many of whom attended today's press conference, had the following to say:

"When I took over as president of AIA-NY, I set two goals: To make the 25th Silver Diwali celebrations history-making, and they were, and to laser-focus on getting the Diwali Stamp issued. I asked my dear friend Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney to take the lead in Congress. I am so delighted to have the support of Reps. Eliot Engel, Steve Israel, Greg Meeks, Yvette Clarke, Grace Meng, and others. Worthy of special note is the support from Reps. Ami Bera and Tulsi Gabbard. The time is now to get as much support as possible, as the USPS' CSAC will make its recommendations later this month. We need each of you and every media outlet to help get the word out: call your Congress member and ask them to sign on to H. Res. 47 now. If we do this, together, we have the chance to get the Diwali Stamp issued this year," said Ranju Batra, Chair of the Diwali Stamp Project and immediate past President of the Association of Indians in America-NY.

"The target audience of the Diwali stamp is over 5 million Americans of South Asian and Caribbean ancestry, along with over 1 billion Hindus across the world. The sale of Diwali Stamps would be a much-needed source of revenue for the US Postal Service in tough economic times. It will reduce the Postal Service's need to always raise postage rates for everyone, while finally acknowledging Hindus here at home and abroad," said Ravi Batra, an attorney and chair of the National Advisory Council on South Asian Affairs.

First time in history, Indian New Year to be celebrated in Times Square



This landmark event showcases the rich culture, heritage and diversity of India in the historic, world-famous Times Square

BY A STAFF WRITER

For the first time ever, Diwali, the Festival of lights and the most significant festival for Asian Indians in the world, will be celebrated at Times Square on 22nd September 2013. It is a full day of fun, food and festivities that has activities for all ages.

This landmark event showcases the rich culture, heritage and diversity of India in the historic, world-famous Times Square. In the afternoon there will be a Cultural Festival which includes a wide variety of Indian food, dance classes, Diya/ Rangoli painting, Indian arts and crafts, a fashion show, photo booths with ethnic outfits, celebrity Autograph/Photo Booth and a lot more.

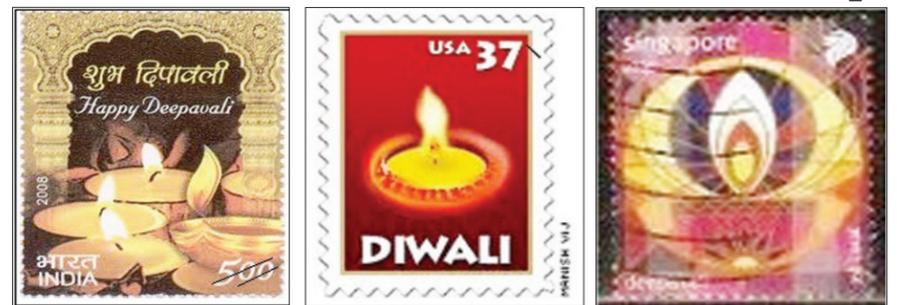
In the evening, the excitement continues with Light up Times Square, a concert showcasing performances by some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry. The concert will also display an orchestrated laser light show and fireworks on big screens, creating a unique visual experience.

ASB Communications is organizing and managing this event. Neeta Bhasin, the President and CEO of ASB Communications, said "We want to show the world how rich Indian culture and heritage is and how diversified India is. We couldn't think of a better place than the center of the Universe - Times Square."

Riwo Norbhu, Regional Manager-Americas for Air India, the official airline of India, said, "Air India is very pleased to be a part of this historic event. As India's flying ambassador in the U.S. for over 50 years, Air India has been guided by a consistent vision -- to promote everything that is best about India to the world. Diwali at Times Square is a perfect event to fulfill this vision."

ASB Communications is a full-service international multicultural advertising and marketing organization. ASB provides integrated marketing solutions to companies looking to target the ethnic market, including the Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European and African markets in USA, UK and Canada. Since its inception in 1997, ASB has nurtured deep roots in the ethnic communities in North America. The company has taken part in over 3,000 events on behalf of its clients.

Renewed push for issuance of commemorative Diwali stamp



A Diwali stamp is important because it would further validate the cultural significance of Indian Americans in the United States

BY A STAFF WRITER

On Sunday, July 28, the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) of the United States Postal Service (USPS) will meet to consider issuing new stamps. This year, there has been a renewed push for the issuance of a commemorative Diwali stamp, which would honor one of the oldest holidays in world. Also known as the Festival of Lights, Diwali symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. The holiday is celebrated by over one billion Indians throughout the world, including the three million who live in the United States.

Inclusiveness is one of the core principles in the United States. This idea is also an integral part of the Diwali holiday, which is celebrated across several religions. The USPS has issued commemorative stamps for holidays like Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa and Eid. For at least ten years, hundreds of thousands of supporters have signed petitions and written letters to the CSAC requesting the issuance of this stamp. Currently, the proposal "remains

under consideration."

"I am asking your editorial board to join a groundswell of support for the issuance of a Diwali stamp, by urging the CSAC to issue a commemorative Diwali stamp when it meets on July 28", said Congresswoman Carolyn B Maloney. "I also ask that you call on members of Congress to sign onto H. Res 47, which I introduced on January 25, 2013 to call on the CSAC to acknowledge the three million Indian Americans in the United States by issuing a commemorative stamp. The resolution enjoys bi-partisan support and has 11 co-sponsors. It has been referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, on which I sit as a senior member."

A Diwali stamp is important because it would further validate the cultural significance of Indian Americans in the United States.

"Different groups within the nation-state want power, recognition, legitimacy as an accepted part of the society, and postage stamps are one way to express this," Dr. Donald Reid, professor emeritus of history at Georgia State told The Huffington Post.