



Indian Consul General Susmita Thomas (4th from l), Consul Ashok Sinha (l), with New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson (5th from l), Satpal Singh Khalsa (r), and local officials.

Khalsa and Pawan Singh were asked by the governor and secretary of state to bring various business delegations from India and that the state of New Mexico would give them full cooperation in developing trade and business relation between the two countries. Thomas also assured full cooperation from her office for increasing trade between India and New Mexico.

Indian Consul General Visits New Mexico, Meets Gov

By a Staff Reporter

San Francisco Indian Consul General Susmita Thomas met privately with New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson during a two-day trip Feb. 24 and 25 to New Mexico, according to a press release from Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Khalsa.

For several years, Richardson has supported the non-resident Indian community in building relations between New Mexico and India for mutual understanding and potential business endeavors, and spent nearly 45 minutes with Thomas discussing the strategic potential between India and New Mexico.

Khalsa, the son-in-law of the late Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji and an ambassador for the Sikh community outside of India, and Pawan Singh Dhindsa, the honorary consul for the state of New Mexico for India, were the main organizers for the visit.

On Feb. 24, Dhindsa hosted a reception at the India House restaurant in Santa Fe, where Thomas spoke to the community about the amazing strides India has made in its economy, and how India is now a leader in many industries, with much to offer the rest of the world.

The following day, Sikh Dharma International hosted a VIP luncheon for Thomas at the estate of the late Yogiji in Espanola, where she was given a tour of the Hacienda de Guru Ram Das ashram and Gurdwara, as well as the offices for SikhNet.

Mexico attorney general Gary King, New Mexico Supreme Court Justice Patricio M. Serna, Espanola Mayor pro-tem Alice Lucero and Senator Jeff Bingaman's representative Pablo Sedillo.

In addition, the wife of the late Siri Singh Sahib, Bhai Sahiba Dr. Bibiji Inderjit Kaur, was in attendance, along with other community leaders.

That evening, a second reception was held for Thomas at the Hotel Santa Fe, where New Mexico secretary of state Mary Herrera was in attendance. Through a program supported by the governor, Herrera had visited India last year to learn about the culture and business potential of the country.

The board of directors for the Santa Fe 400th Anniversary Committee also met with Thomas during the reception, at which time board president Maurice Bonal invited her to add an item on behalf of India to the time capsule being prepared by the committee.

Thomas later presented traditional ceremonial swords to Santa Fe Mayor David Coss and Bonal in honor of the large Sikh community that has settled in New Mexico.

Meanwhile, Satpal Singh asked the consul general to look into areas of mutual trade between New Mexico and India, particularly in the area of Ayurveda as New Mexico is perhaps the only state that has passed a bill allowing any kind of alternative medicine that can be practiced in New Mexico freely.