



## **PRESS RELEASE**

The Siddhi Damal Group, sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi, gave a scintillating performance at the John Guise Stadium at 'India Nite' organized by the Indian Association of PNG and the High Commission of India, Port Moresby. The event was attended by political, social and business elites including expatriates from various nations, members of diplomatic corps, educational and charity institutions. All participants appreciated the energetic performance by the Group.

The performance by the Group included the muezzin's call to assemble for prayers, the rite of passage of breaking a coconut by tossing up in the air and taking it on the forehead, hunting lions by cornering it in the centre of the Group, ceremonial dancing after crocodile hunting, etc. The enthusiasm and energy of the group and audience involvement and participation was appreciated by one and all.

At the invitation of the Hon'ble Governor Mr Powes Parkop, a repeat performance by the Group, open to public, was also staged at the Jack Pidik Park on Sunday, 28 October. Thousands of Papua New Guineans attended the colourful event which was addressed by the Hon'ble Governor and the High Commissioner. Cultural groups from the Central Province, Manus Islands and Trobriand Islands also performed traditional dances at the event. A bit of Bollywood colour was added by Mr. Arjun Gurung during the performances. A notable feature of the evening was the fusion of various dance groups on one stage showing similarities of Indian and Papua New Guineans cultural traditions.

Dr. A.M. Gondane, High Commissioner, while addressing the gathering both at the 'India Nite' function on 27 October and the public gathering at the Jack Pidik Park on 28 October, emphasized India's readiness for enriching the social and economic milieu in PNG by way of sharing its soft power, developed over several decades of human resources and cultural development in India. He invited dance groups for performances in various cities of India.

The Siddhi Damal Group is composed of members from the small Goma Community, living in the scrublands and forests of Gir, which is also home to the great Asiatic Lions in Gujarat, a State in Western India. The Gomas are descendents of migrants from East Africa who came as warrior clans and since settled in western parts of India. Their rhythm and tones, their racial features and dance postures resemble those of our East African brethren. This small group, as indeed all religious, tribal, linguistic and racial groups are not only encouraged to retain their identities, but are actively promoted by the Government of India, which adds to the beauty of vibrant diversity in the mosaic of Indian unity.

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