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COMMUNITY

India Abroad
January 22, 2010

AJIT JAIN
IN TORONTO

Dr Asha Seth, president, Northern Indian Medical and Dental Association Foundation, presented a check for \$35,000 to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind January 12. John M Rafferty, president and CEO, CNIB (Toronto) accepted the check.

"I am really impressed with the work CNIB has done and are doing to change the lives of those who lost have their vision," Seth said. "Just imagine a child who doesn't know the rainbow colors, beauty of rising sun."

CNIB will use the money to start a skills academy for young children.

"There are," Rafferty said, "close to 20,000 blind or partially sighted children under the age of 15 in Canada. They require the most intensive support offered by CNIB, as they are developing basic learning and life skills without the benefit of full vision. In addition to this tremendous disadvantage, this group often lacks a sense of community among their peers that is integral to healthy personal development."

Skills Academy is designed to deliver a number of services, like early intervention services that support very young children and their parents in basics such as reading and communicating. The NIMDAC foundation has chosen to support grades 1 and 2, which is working with children and their parents to encourage learning and playing in a group setting, with a focus on integration into the public school system.

"CNIB will share the plan with the NIMDAC Foundation

and its board' and it will subsequently be 'mapped and vetted,' Rafferty explained.

NIMDAC board members, including Dr Ranjit S Rana, Dr Vijay Sharma and CNIB board members — Clint Castle (Winnipeg), Sam Fulton (Ottawa), Jim Hynes (St John's, Newfoundland), Mario Lemieux (Montreal), Magie Knox (Vancouver), and Dale Richards from Calgary — were present at the ceremony.



Dr Asha Seth hands over the check to John Rafferty, third from left. Others, from left: Al Jameson, V Rana, M Sharma, Dr Vijay Sharma, Dr Ranjit S Rana and Dr Arun Seth

COURTESY: NIMDAC FOUNDATION

NIMDAC Foundation donates \$35,000 for the blind

An Indian Idol in Canada



Farzana Bohra



Naresh Gupta

AJIT JAIN
IN TORONTO

Toronto-based Panorama India, in association with the consulate general of India, is holding contests in two batches, to select four finalists and crown one of them 'Indian Idol' at India's 60th Republic Day celebrations January 31 at the Pearson Convention Center in suburban Brampton, says Panorama India President, Ajit Khanna.

Aspiring singers 16 years or older will compete in two preliminary rounds taking place on two Saturdays at the Etobicoke Civic Center. The first batch participated

January 9 before a panel of three judges — Subrata Prohit, Padma Kotambari and Vinayak Hegde. The finalists will be announced after the second batch performs next week.

Farzana Bohra, 25, pursuing her engineering at the McMaster University in Hamilton, was amongst those who competed in the first batch. She told *India Abroad* she learnt Indian classical music and singing at the Bharatiya Kala Kendra in Kuwait. She has won a countrywide singing competition in Kuwait. She sang two classical songs and was optimistic of being one of the finalists. Khanna called her singing 'astounding'. "I think the whole idea of holding the contest is really nice as there are so many Indians in

Canada. This gives them an opportunity for showcasing their talent," Bohra said.

Naresh Gupta, 58, who works in sales and marketing for a car dealership in Toronto, learnt Indian classical and film songs by himself. He has never sung on stage. "I used to sing at family get-togethers and in All India Radio competitions. Many people used to appreciate my voice, so I said to myself why not compete here," he said.

"Four finalists will compete in the final round scheduled to take place January 31 during the Indian Mela and Republic Day celebration," said Khanna. That day they will crown the Indian Idol, which will then become an annual feature.