



India, Canada collaborate on children's health

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The Indian government will hold the first-ever India Festivals in Canada, a year-long series of events, in 2011.

Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai, a keynote speaker at the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce Gala June 6, announced it at the event. The India Festivals, he said, 'will stretch all across Canada, in major cities, and we hope to bring top performers and artists, dancers, musicians; there will be art exhibitions as well.'

The Indian government, Gavai also said, has okayed a grant of Rs 5 million (about \$120,000) as funding for Indian physicians for specialized training in Canada. Five Indian doctors are already here at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children 'training in various specialized areas and they will use this knowledge when they go back to India, not only to treat children in India but also to train other doctors. So, it will have a multiplier effect,' Gavai said.

These five doctors are here as part of Healthy Kids International's Healthier Children: Better World program. Healthy Kids International, an initiative of the Sick Kids Foundation, is addressing the shortage of pediatric specialists working in select developing countries where financial issues have traditionally created gaps in care.



Dr Ashwin Mallipatna

India's support of the program is for three years 'at least in the beginning,' Gavai said. He said the program will 'benefit Canada [*also*] because these are competent doctors.'

Gavai identified Indo-Canadian Kasi Rao as the key person working behind the scenes on the project.

Rao said the five Indian doctors in Toronto for training are Dr B P Karunakara, Dr Ashwin Mallipatna (both from Bangalore), Dr Tapas Som (Kolkata), Dr Madhavan Jayadeesan (Chennai) and Dr Manish Parekh (Jodhpur).

'The government of India's support of our HKI-India program is a powerful testament to engaging the Diaspora in meaningful ways,' Rao said.

Gavai presented a check for Rs 1.5 million to an HKI representative.

Mallipatna, who has been in Canada for two years and returns to Bangalore next month, said the larger significance of India's participation in the HKI program is at the national level they are supporting. "It is very, very important," he *told India Abroad* "the Indian government has given this money."

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