

Successful Kick Off to Sister Cities Initiative at Asian Art Museum

For immediate release

Contact: Jim Herlihy, 415-617-3516, Madhav Misra 415-755-8822

San Francisco, November 10, 2009 -- More than 50 people gathered at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco Tuesday evening for a kick off reception for the inaugural trade and friendship mission of the San Francisco Bangalore Sister Cities Initiative.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom is leading a delegation of civic, business and cultural leaders on November 27 to Bangalore, India. He joined the delegates to share his vision for the trip. "I have the same hopes and plans that this sister cities relationship can excel as the sister cities relationships with Shanghai and Osaka," he said and added that he would stay a day or two longer in Bangalore than he had initially expected to. This is Mayor Newsom's first visit to India. He is expected to sign at least four Memoranda of Understanding in Bangalore.

The evening began with welcome remarks by Madhav Misra and Jim Herlihy, co-chairs of the San Francisco Bangalore Sister Cities Initiative. Mr. Misra said "a thousand flowers had bloomed" ever since Mayor Newsom and the Chief Minister of Karnataka, B.S. Yeddyurappa, had signed a memorandum of understanding a year ago that had established Bangalore, the capital of the state of Karnataka, and San Francisco would be sister cities.

Mr. Herlihy recalled that Mr. Newsom had come up with the idea for the initiative during their trip to Shanghai in 2005 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the San Francisco Shanghai Sister Cities relationship. "It's taken us a little bit of time, but we've done it right," said Mr. Herlihy.

The primary goal of the visit to Bangalore is to deepen ties between the two regions so that residents of both these areas can benefit in tangible ways from this relationship. The members of the committee are working on establishing agreements between groups on both sides in the areas of trade, technical co-operation, investment, health, culture, education and philanthropy.

George Shultz, former U.S. Secretary of State, attended the event to wish the delegates bon voyage. He shared his memories of India with the delegates. "The Taj Mahal is the most beautiful building human beings have ever produced," he said. He warmly recalled Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's state visit to the U.S. and his subsequent journey to India. His wife, Charlotte Shultz, the ceremonial Chief of Protocol and Director of Special Events for the City and County of San Francisco, gave the delegates protocol tips to remember while traveling in India.

The evening also featured guided tours of the Indian galleries in the museum.

Successful Kick Off to Sister Cities Initiative at Asian Art Museum

The reception was hosted by Asian Art Foundation trustee Judy Wilbur.

The San Francisco-Bangalore Sister City Initiative is a volunteer-driven, not-for-profit-organization that aims to engage individuals and institutions in Bangalore and San Francisco in creating sustainable 21st century cities through an exchange of environmental, economic, technological, and cultural ideas, expertise and resources.

*For more on the San Francisco Bangalore Sister Cities Initiative --
<http://sfbangalore.org/>*

For more information on Sister Cities, first envisioned by President Eisenhower as the main cog for citizen diplomacy -- <http://www.sister-cities.org/>