

Fremont : It was a very special day here in Northern California, USA when all local Indian 'groups' put up celebration of India's independence day parade on Sunday, August 17, 2003. Kashmiri Pandits celebrated the independence day by having a float that was called "Kashmir Paradise on Earth". It contained a Kashmiri bride and bridegroom, a hukka-smoking man, a pandit ji blessing the crowd, and a bunch of teenagers and teen-at-heart singing and dancing Bombro-Bombro, seated in a shikara on a lotus decked lake, tastefully painted by volunteers. The boat had a swag of 'hill' (moss) hanging at its tail as well.

About 100 Kashmiri Pandit men, women and children with a half dozen baby strollers walked along the float during the parade, shouting slogans like "Bharat Maata Ki - Jai" and "Kashmir- Hamaara Hai". It was a very happy, assertive, and properly expressive bunch. "Never ever have we have seen such a large crowd of enthusiasts before," said Jeevan Zutshi, one of the organizers of the event. "It was due to community involvement and organizers like Ajoy Zutshi, Ankit Monga, Vinod Moza, Ashish Bambroo and Sanjay Kak who worked very hard to produce the most beautiful Float, " Zutshi said.

The Float was sponsored by Indo-American Community Federation headed by Jeevan Zutshi.

The same evening Indo-American Kashmir Forum held a reception for congressman Frank Pallone in the house of Usha and Jeevan Zutshi in Fremont hills. The reception was supported by Indian American Friendship Council. Its founder, Los Angeles based, Dr. Krishna Reddy spoke with passion about Congressman Pallone and issues affecting Indo-US relations which are being handled by him in the most fair and professional way in the U.S Congress. He talked about the progress caucus has made in the past 10 years with founders like Congressman Pallone and Congressman Sherrod Brown.

"Others in attendance were Dr. Subroto Kundu, Dr. Sarbjit Hundal, Roger Bakshi of Calcoast mortgage, Fremont City Councilmember Dominic Dutra, Community leader Dave Bonocorsi, and Assembly candidate Ashok Bhat. The meeting began with Jeevan Zutshi, Founding Member of Indo-American Kashmir Forum welcoming and recognizing one and all individually in the audience. Dr. Ravi Kaw, a member of the IAKF, thanked Congressman Pallone on behalf of Indo-American Kashmir Forum as the representative body of Kashmiri Pandits in USA. Dr. N L Zutshi did the same as a past office holder of All India Kashmiri Samaj, an organization of Kashmiris based in Delhi, India. Nearly 50 Kashmiri Pandits had gathered at the dinner reception to thank Pallone, for his kind gesture and efforts to get US Aid for the rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiri Pandits, who have become refugees in their own country. Local Congressman Pete Stark introduced Congressman Frank Pallone as a leader in the U.S Congress of highest integrity and welcomed him to his Congressional district which includes Fremont.

Congressman Frank Pallone started by joking with Congressman Pete Stark about having a fund-raiser in his congressional district, and then reading from a writeup from the Congressional record "Honoring Jeevan Zutshi for his dedication to Kashmir". The last paragraph OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD reads " Mr. Zutshi's devotion to his community and his commitment to the acceptance of and tolerance of diverse cultures makes him an invaluable asset to the Kashmir and Indo-American community. I am proud to call Jeevan a friend and I ask my colleagues to join with me in recognizing a selfless, tireless and committed member of our community." It was a very proud moment for all Kashmiri Pandits to be surprised by this pleasant honor. They all felt honored, including all other Indo-Americans, who were present in the gathering of about 125 people. Pallone said that any solution to the Kashmir problem is incomplete without the proper return of

Kashmiri Pandits who are willing to return to the valley, and proper compensation for the losses suffered by all. He moved on to his other agenda for the India caucus: (1) a defense-coalition between US and India, which he termed as the only way to get the two countries close; (2) creation of a south Asia defense organization on the style of the likes of NATO that respects the role of India as the head of world's nonaligned movement; (3) better trade between India and US by having less barriers; (4) educating the world that Indian companies are creating jobs in US and not the other way round only; (5) emphasizing the similarity between US and India as democracies that "honor secularism at the core"; (6) explaining (in answer to someone's question) that H-1 visas will not go away but since people are available locally lesser number of outsiders will be able to avail of the H-1 visa for now. The evening finished midnight with a thunderous applause for the two senior and most powerful members of Congress. "It was just a humbling experience to have these two great members of Congress in my humble home", said Jeevan Zutshi. "This is an indication of the respect the Indo-American Community has earned for their dedication and hard work."