

Preeti Desai, 25, is crowned Miss Great Britain

Preeti Desai has become the first person of Indian origin to win the Miss Great Britain title, earning the honour of representing the U.K. in the Miss Universe contest.

British-born Preeti Desai, who was crowned Miss Great Britain on November 21, is said to have always been the centre of attraction due to her "raven hair and exotic skin tone".

Preeti, 25, clinched the title after she got the maximum number of text messages and phone votes by readers of the *Sun* newspaper.

"People were always telling my mum I should go into modelling, even when I was little," an excited Preeti Desai told the newspaper.

Preeti's mother Hema said: "When she (Preeti) was crowned Miss Great Britain



Miss Great Britain Preeti Desai

she rang to tell me and said, 'The crown is for you.' I burst into tears. I felt as if I won that crown. I felt as if I am Miss Great Britain. She only wants to see me happy — both my girls do."

Hema had arrived in the U.K. from India in 1980, a short while before Preeti was born.

Preeti from Guisborough, North Yorkshire, won the title by replacing original winner Danielle Lloyd after she was stripped off the award.

The *Sun* newspaper reported: "Meet new Miss Great Britain Preeti Desai, who landed the title after being chosen by Sun readers to replace sacked original winner Danielle Lloyd. Now the 25-year-old from Guisborough, North Yorks, has been catapulted on to the world stage, where she will represent the country."



Suresh Pachauri, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, who headed the 15-member delegation, addressing the audience at the reception hosted at India House on November 11 by High Commissioner Kamallesh Sharma.

Reception hosted for Indian Parliamentary 'Goodwill Delegation'

High Commissioner Kamallesh Sharma hosted a reception on Saturday, November 11, 2006, at India House in honour of the Goodwill Delegation of Parliamentarians from India.

The 15-member delegation was led by Suresh Pachauri, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.

High Commissioner Sharma and Minister Pachauri addressed the gathering which included eminent nonresident Indians based in London.

BT applies for long-distance licences in India

Britain's BT Group Plc. has applied for licences to provide domestic and international long-distance telecom services in India to both foreign companies setting up operations and Indian firms expanding offshore.

BT said it saw revenues from its Indian operations at \$250 million by 2009, and planned to hire an additional 6,000



people over the next two years. It currently employs 15,000 staff in Asia-Pacific, of whom at least 60 percent are based in India. "We would now have the ability to directly serve Indian companies that have a global presence and also multinational firms that have multi-site operations," C.S. Rao, managing director at BT India, told reporters.

India is home to the world's fastest-growing wireless services market, and over the past year it has substantially cut market entry fees in a bid to inject competition for domestic and international calls.

Rao said the BT Group had formed a majority-owned joint venture firm, BT Telecom India Ltd., with Jubilant Group, its Indian partner, owning 26 percent stake. Rao estimated the market for such services at more than \$1 billion annually, growing between 14 and 18 percent as Indian firms expand overseas and foreign companies set up operations in India, which is forecast to grow at around 8 percent in the year to March 2007.

The firm plans to provide voice and data services based on virtual private networks, international conferencing services and voice and multimedia services for the back office industry.

High Commissioner attends Memorial Gates ceremony

The Memorial Gates Commemorative Committee held its fourth annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Memorial Gates on Constitution Hill.

A moving service was led by the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, who addressed the congregation of 250 people and spoke poignantly about the importance of remembrance and reflection at this time of year.

This colourful annual event is unique in bringing together people from all of the armed forces and of all ages, nationalities and faiths in remembrance and celebration.

It pays tribute to the huge contribution made by the five million men and women from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Caribbean who volunteered to serve with the British Armed Forces during the First and Second World Wars.

The High Commissioners of India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Nepal and Jamaica and the Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan were among those

who laid wreaths and paid their respects.

Addressing the congregation, Lord Karan Bilimoria, CBE DL, Chairman of the Memorial Gates Committee, said: "To the brave soldiers who gave their tomorrow for our today, and to the men and women of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Africa and the Caribbean, whose sacrifice and courage is an eternal example and inspiration of strength, of nobility, and of imperishable virtue: We salute you. We will never forget you. We thank you."

Baroness Sheila Flather, JP DL, Patron of the Memorial Gates Trust added, "It is so important for us to continue to show our appreciation for the invaluable contribution made by people from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Caribbean in the two World Wars.

"This is a tremendously special and unique occasion when people from all different backgrounds and communities come together."



The Bishop of London with Lord Karan Bilimoria.



The LABA (Leicester Asian Business Association) Annual Awards Dinner Function was held at Leicester on November 10. Seen in the photo are, from Left, Jaffar Kaasi, LABA Director, Rajat Bagchi, Minister, Coordination, Indian High Commission, Dinesh Patel of Cofresh Ltd. (Lifetime Achievement Award), Jaimina Ghelani (Woman Entrepreneur of the Year), and Sukhdev Bansal LABA Director. (Photo Courtesy Raju Vyas)



The birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was celebrated in London by the Sardar Patel Memorial Society on October 31. Tony McNulty, MP, Harrow East, and Minister of State at Home Office, was the Chief Guest at the event, and Ranjan Mathai, Deputy High Commissioner, was the Guest of Honour. Mr. Mathai is seen lighting the ceremonial lamp.

A group of a dozen young Indian journalists who are participating in a three-month course with Westminster University under the Chevening scholarship programme were welcomed by Deputy High Commissioner Ranjan Mathai on November 23 in a reception held at India House. Seen in the photo are Mr. Mathai and Kuldeep Bhardwaj, Minister (Press), with the journalists from different mainstream newspapers in India and other guests.

