

## **International Day of Yoga on Thursday 21 June 2018 at 10:15hrs at SVICC**

1. As we gather here today, the International Day of Yoga is being celebrated across the world. Millions of people around the world are participating in this event.
2. The idea of International Day of Yoga was first proposed by the Prime Minister of India, Sree Narendra Modi at the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2014. During his speech he stated (**I quote**) *“Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help in well being. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day”* (**End quote**).
3. Following the adoption of the UN resolution, several leaders of the spiritual movement in India voiced their support for the initiative. The founder of Isha Foundation, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, stated, *"this could be a kind of a foundation stone to make scientific approach to the inner well-being of the human being, a worldwide thing... It's a tremendous step for the world"*. The founder of Art of Living, Shri Shri Ravi Shankar, praised the efforts of Prime Minister Modi, saying, (**I quote**) *"It is very difficult for any*

*philosophy, religion or culture to survive without state patronage. Yoga has existed so far almost like an orphan. Now, official recognition by the UN would further spread the benefit of yoga to the entire world.” (End Quote)*

4. People have different ways of relaxing, some of them healthier than others. Some people take a glass of wine, some doze off in front of the TV, and some people prefer physical pursuits. But one of the best and oldest ways to release the tension building up in both the body and the mind is practicing yoga. The benefits of practicing yoga, such as mastering countless techniques of controlling the body and the mind, have been widely recognized by the Western world for years. International Yoga Day aims to continue to inform people how much dedicating a bit of time to the art of yoga can improve their lives.
5. Many countries which do not know the Indian *language, tradition, or culture*, are now connecting to India through Yoga. Yoga has helped and continues to help millions of people all over the world achieve inner peace and improve their physical condition, regardless of age or gender, so it is practically guaranteed that it would have a positive impact on your life as well.
6. All joys and gratifications in this material world are momentary. In order to achieve that state of lasting happiness and absolute peace, the mind’s focus has to be turned inward, upon the self. When the mind is thus fully focused on the self, time does not even seem to exist and you don’t feel like coming out of that blissful state, which is meditation. All yoga practices essentially culminate in meditation, wherein one attains a state of consciousness, free from all forms of dynamic or disruptive thoughts.

7. The problems of modern lifestyles are well known. People suffer from stress related ailments, lifestyle-related diseases like diabetes and hyper-tension. The medical profession has found ways to control communicable diseases, but the burden of disease is shifting to non-communicable diseases. Yoga is that medicine that has the power to cure most of these non-communicable diseases.
8. The benefits of yoga are manifold. Yoga is an art which connects our soul, mind, and body together. It makes us strong, flexible, peaceful and healthy. When practised correctly and with discipline, Yoga not only leads to inner peace but it also keeps us fit.
9. Today children are as stressed as adults. Growing competition in schools and colleges, dealing with peer pressure, the difficult stage of puberty, extracurricular activities and meeting parents' and teachers' expectations are very stressful for children. The best way we can cope with this pressure is by practising yoga. Yoga influences children's emotions and behaviour; it has a positive effect on the mental state and aids creativity. In fact it has been proved scientifically that yoga helps your body to relax and soothes your mind. Also it helps to improve your concentration power. Students can gain various other benefits from yoga that will help them in completing their work perfectly and make them high scorer in the class.
10. I am happy to note that with the educational reform, yoga has been introduced as a non-core subject in many of our schools. Besides, the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture runs yoga classes for various levels, from Certificate to Advanced Diploma.

11. One of the great things about yoga is that it does not require expensive equipment or a special location; it can be practiced pretty much anywhere at any time as needed. This has helped the formation of many small groups of young people as well as senior citizens practising Yoga in Mauritius, be it at the workplace during lunch time, at home, in community centres or in clubs.
12. Twenty to thirty minutes of Yoga a day keep the doctor away and can change your life in the long run. So let's celebrate together this International Day of Yoga For Peace.
13. On behalf of all of you here today, I need to congratulate and thank the High Commissioner of India, Shri Abhay Thakur and the staff of the Indian High Commission for organising Yoga Day here to-day. I am afraid I will not be able to stay as I have another pre-arranged function – but I wish you all an enjoyable and very rewarding yoga practice.