



Gospel artist Linda Dlamini enjoys a moment with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The local troupe is in India for the 36th Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2023 in Faridabad which started last week. The group is expected back home next weekend.



Simanga Mkhwanazi also had an opportunity to pose with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

FIRST INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO ESWATINI VISITS LOCAL TROUPE

BY SIMON SHABANGU
Mbabane

FORMER Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini Radha Venkataraman is in love with local art and craft being showcased at the ongoing 36th Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2023 in India.

The retired first high commissioner visited the local troupe at the Bazaar and also the Eswatini stall, where she bought a few items on display. She said the group reminded her of her time in the country, adding that she still had a soft spot for the Kingdom of Eswatini where her she spent her last years as a diplomat.

She also noted that the people of India and the different nationalities visiting the Bazaar on daily basis loved the Swazi craft.

"I noticed that the traditional attire attracted almost all visitors at the Bazaar and they frequented the stand to take selfies and buy the wares on display.



Former Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini Radha Venkataraman and a companion with the Eswatini troupe, which is currently in India. The locals also have a stall where they are showcasing local handicraft and artwork.

The Emaswati performers were enthusiastic," she said. The former high commissioner said she was personally impressed with the innovative jewellery made out of zippers at the stall, the wood carved big five sculptures

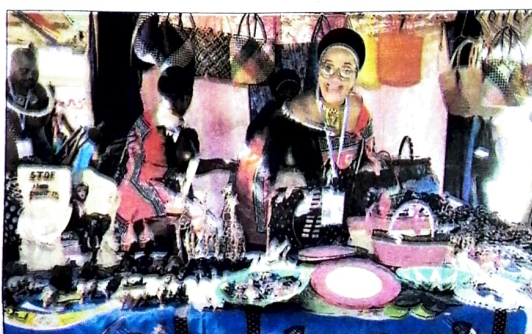
and the various grass woven items. "I also learnt from the group that they are enjoying their stay in the country. They also expressed satisfaction with the arrangements made for them at the Bazaar. I am also excited that I started this initiative which is growing and benefiting both Eswatini and Surajkund," she said.

She said she was happy to have organised and coordinated the last visit to India in 2022, as she was unable to do it in 2021 because the lockdown restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "I was able to organise the tour in February 2022, where we had eight traditional dancers along with five artisans. The team created quite a spectacle as they displayed their skills and with their handicraft items.

"This year I was thrilled when I was notified of their participation yet again. As I am back in Delhi enjoying my retirement life," she said. The 20-member delegation is led by Eswatini National Council of Arts and Culture (ENCAC) CEO Stanley Dlamini. It comprises of 15 traditional performers and five artisans. Also part of the group is gospel artist Linda Dlamini. The troupe has also had the privilege of meeting India's Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi.



Venkataraman with Sithembile Zwane-Dlamini who is an Accountant at the ministry of sports culture and youth affairs as well as an artisan specialising in handicraft and artwork.



Sithembile Zwane-Dlamini at the Eswatini stall.



Linda Dlamini sandwiched by some of the participants of the fair.



The local troupe displaying the Eswatini flag.



The former high commissioner with leader of the delegation, Stanley Dlamini.