India’s dynamism can promote Commonwealth goals

India can add value to the Commonwealth with a more active engagement, Commonwealth Foundation Chairman and former Governor General Sir Anand Satyanand has said.

He quoted Commonwealth Secretariat Director of Political Affairs Amitav Banerji as saying, “The Commonwealth approach generally is not to publicly name and shame, not to use megaphones to chide or
rebuke but to engage quietly, to agree on shared goals and then provide support in achieving these in partnership.”

Describing the comment as ‘a valuable benchmark for the entire Commonwealth,” Sir Anand said, “My thesis, which is also a challenge, is that India can be an even more important part of the dynamo that needs to be operating to secure the proper goals of the Commonwealth.”

**Extending friendship**

Sir Anand was speaking at the inaugural Business Summit of the ‘India-New Zealand Friendship Association (INZFA)’ in Chennai on January 12, 2015. As reported in our December 15, 2014 issue, the event was organised jointly with the Loyola Institute of Business Administration (LIBA) under the theme, ‘Extending hands of Friendship across Oceans’ at Hotel Hyatt Regency, with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry as the Event Partner.

Sir Anand said that the Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 53 countries accounting for about two billion people, is home to people of many faiths and ethnicities and includes some of the world’s largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries.

**Historic connections**

“The present Commonwealth with its set up of divisions and a standalone Secretariat has been in place since 1965 and this year’s CHOGM in Malta in November will (at least in part) celebrate 50 years of an on-going organisation. In fact, the crucial time can be said to have been during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting in 1949 when the then members, numbering fewer than 53 met in London. There was great anxiety and anticipation as to what might happen because India, Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) were present for the first time as independent Republics. The fact that all countries resolved to maintain the historic connection with their past was a crucial matter for what has happened since,” he said.

**Maintaining Values**

According to Sir Anand, although the future of the Commonwealth comes under the microscope frequently, the approach it advances of maintenance of values enables it to continue in business with its future being something that can be faced with some certainty.
“I for one accept that the main needs are for the benefit of those who are poor, undernourished, hungry and underprivileged, India has lived through these past times reaching its present state of economic development where much has been achieved and there is much left to be done,” Sir Anand said.

**India Initiatives**

He acknowledged the new policy initiatives of the Indian government over the past decade to connect with the Indian Diaspora, including Non-Resident Indians (those living as expatriates elsewhere) and People of Indian Origin (PIO).

He cited the annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas held in India from January 7 to 9 during which at least 12 PIO are honoured with the ‘Pravasi Samman Award.’

National MP Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi was among the recipients of the Award this year in Ahmedabad on January 9, 2015 from India’s President Pranab Mukherjee (*Please read our front-page story*).

**The Speakers**

Nawab Mohammed Abdulla Ali, The Prince of Arcot

Nawab Mohammed Abdulla Ali, the Prince of Arcot, was the Chief Guest at the Chennai Conference.

Among the other speakers at the Chennai Conference were New Zealand High Commissioner to India Grahame Morton, New Zealand’s Consul General (Dubai) and Regional Director, India, Middle East and Africa and New Zealand Consul General, Trade Commissioner (West & South India, Sri Lanka and Maldives) Kevin McKenna and The Warehouse Chief Executive Officer Mark Powell.

External Affairs Ministry Secretary (East) Anil Wadhwa, LIBA Founder-Director Rev Dr Casimir Raj, Former Secretary to Indian President Pejavar Murari, Commerce & Industry Joint Secretary J K Dadoo and India Beachhead Advisor (affiliated to New Zealand Trade & Enterprise) Ashish Hemrajani were among the government officials.
Other speakers from INZFA included WAML Group Chairman Wenceslaus Anthony, Cemix Managing Director Bhav Dhillon, Patton Limited Global Chief Executive Sameer Handa, Kalamazoo Group Chairman & Managing Director Steve D’Souza and Newton College of Business & Technology Chief Executive Ashish Trivedi.