

India Herald

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Kavya Rajan named Ekal USA executive director

The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation has named Kavya Rajan as its first executive director.

Rajan's main responsibility will be to champion the cause of Ekal in the U.S. amongst corporations, foundations and the American communities.

Rajan's appointment was announced last Saturday at a fundraiser in Houston, which raised over \$800,000 towards Ekal's mission to educate rural and tribal children in India.

The funds raised will support about 2,200 schools and 77,000 children.

Rajan has extensive international experience in the US, India, Austria and Bosnia-Herzegovina. She worked for five years as a diplomat for the United Nations and OSCE in post-conflict rehabilitation and human rights.

She also worked for two years as Communications Director for the American India Foundation, where she helped spotlight India's social and economic development in the mainstream media.

Rajan has a Bachelors from Georgetown University and Masters from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. She speaks English, Tamil and German.

Rajan joins the Ekal family to follow a deep personal conviction to help uplift the millions of Indians still living in dire poverty, despite the overall phenomenon of economic growth in India.

Rajan hails from a family of socially conscious individuals; her mother, Dr. Sudha Rajan, is involved in yoga research for medical benefit and her sister, Hamsa Rajan, evaluates public health clinics in rural Tibet.

Ekal USA is associated with the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India (Ekal India), a charitable trust that initiates, supports and runs non-formal, single-teacher schools (known as ekal vidyalayas) in very remote parts of India.

Ekal India serves as an umbrella organization for various



Kavya Rajan

non-profits working in a broadly defined educational space, including: basic education, health education, development education and empowerment education; they have collectively become one of the largest non-governmental grass root education movements in India.

Ekal India has an astonishing 40,000 dedicated volunteers spearheading this movement.

Ekal USA was established in 2001 and has 18 chapters all over the US, including in Houston, Dallas, Tampa, Detroit, Los Angeles and New York.

Ekal USA works to spread awareness and connect resources between the US and India. Ekal USA supports over 7,300 schools and 255,000 children in India.

Yoga guru draws record crowd; Lays foundation for 'yoga city'

By SESHADRI KUMAR HOUSTON

The yoga guru Swami Ramdev's five-day camp at George R. Brown Convention Center was the talk of the town as it attracted more than 2,000 people at 6 a.m. every day, with a peak attendance of 3,000 on Saturday, July 19.

Among those attending the camp was Chancellor Renu Khator of the University of Houston System who spoke briefly of her pride in Indian traditions such as Yoga.

On Saturday, U.S. Rep. Nick Lampson, D-Stafford, attended and showed an interest in learning some pranayam exercises.

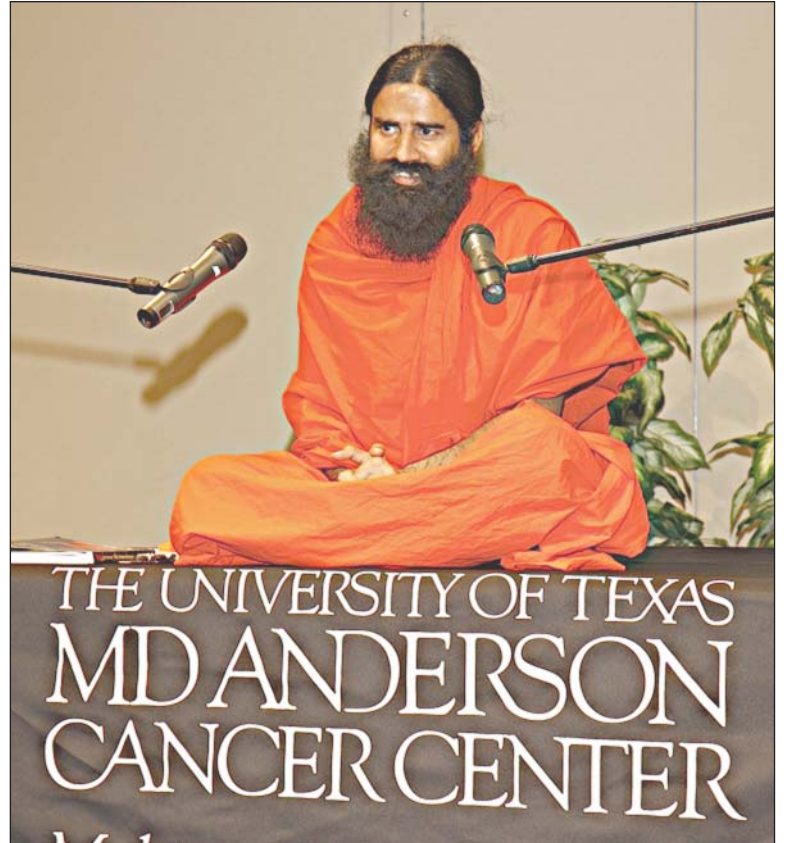
(See picture below where Lampson is doing the yoga exercise.)

The first international center based on the model of Pathanjali Yog Peeth in Haridwar, founded by Swami Ramdev 15 years ago will be established in Rosenberg, 25 miles from Houston.

Swami Ramdev performed the Bhoomi Puja for the \$20 million project.

While about \$5 million has already been raised for the project, in the presence of Swami Ramdev, \$2 million was raised in two hours during a fundraiser on July 18.

A well-attended presentation by the swami at the world-renowned M.D. Anderson Cancer Center on



Swami Ramdev addresses the medical community in Houston.

July 17 mesmerized the medical community.

After creating a mass movement among people who follow his breathing exercises in India, both in person and through the popular cable television channel,

Aastha, Swami Ramdev is conducting Yoga Science Camps in the U.S. and Canada in July and August and Houston was one of the venues.

Photos by Bijay Dixit
See more on Pages 11 to 14.



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Swami Ramdev turns Space city 'upside down'

Houston known as the "Space City" nearly turned into a "Yoga City" under the spell of Swami Ramdev from July 16 to 20.

Saturday evening, more than 1,000 children attended a special workshop hosted by Swami Ramdev, again an unprecedented turnout.

Earlier, a well-attended presentation by the swami at the world-renowned M.D. Anderson Cancer Center mesmerized the medical community.

As an icing on the cake, Swami Ramdev placed Houston on the world yoga map and laid the ground-

work for the first international Patanjali Yog Peeth on a 94-acre site in Rosenberg, a Houston suburb.

Swami Ramdev expanded his motto of providing health for all and committed to establishing schools under the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation for the tribal children in India's rural areas, under the auspices of Pathajali Yog Peeth in Haridwar.

He attended a fund raiser hosted by the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation in Houston on July 19.

To remain hale and healthy, just inhale and exhale. Then, you will breathe

a sigh of relief from many ailments is Swami Ramdev's simple message.

Saying "good health is humanity's birth right", he literally breathed new life into thousands of people.

The Houston camp was attended by several people who are not of Indian origin, including persons from various countries.

Patanjali Sewa Center headed by Vaidya K.B. Singh is already busy in southwest Houston.

Swami Ramdev formally dedicated the center on July 17.

—Seshadri Kumar

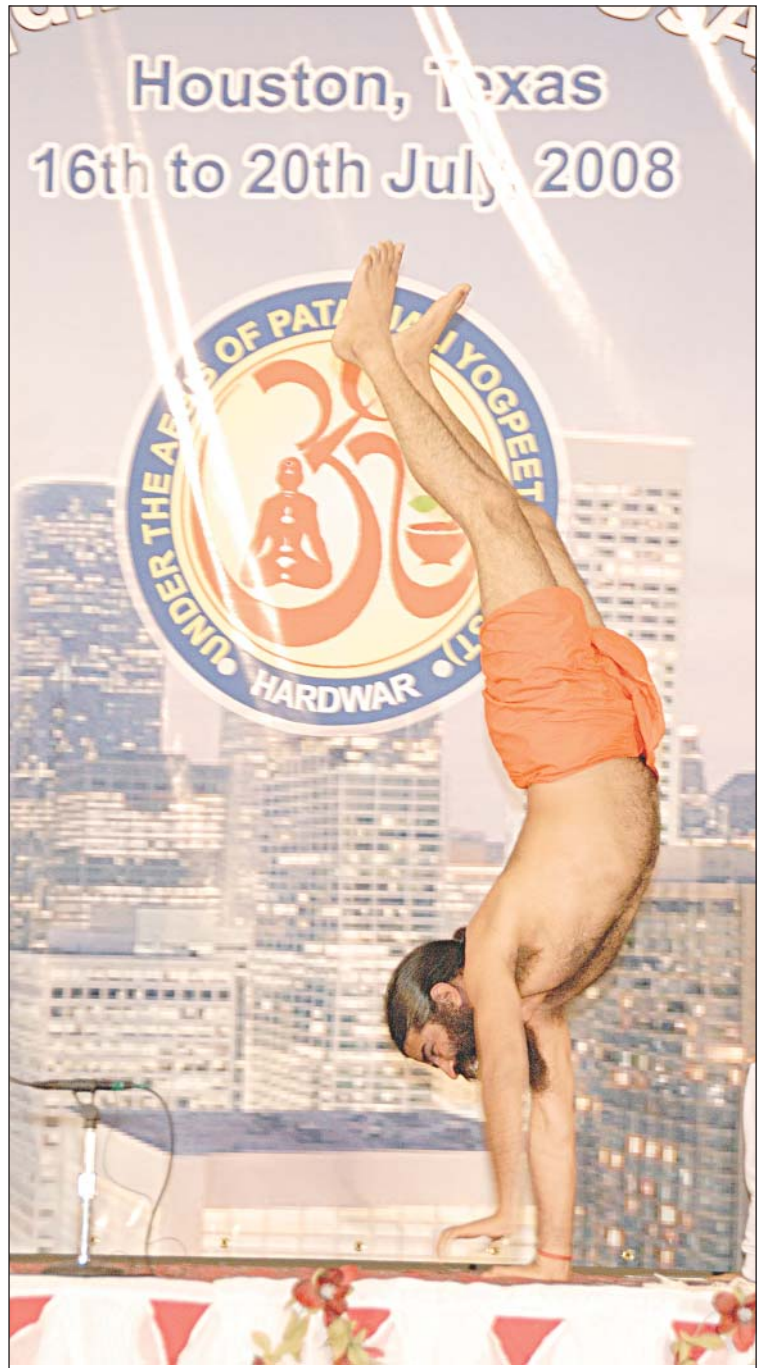


Above, over 1,000 children perform physical exercise as a prelude to the yoga workshop at George R. Brown Convention center.

Right, senior citizens, though seated in chairs, perform breathing exercises at the yoga camp.



A young girl does pranayam, controlled inhaling and exhaling, at the yoga camp in Houston.



A breath-taking posture by Swami Ramdev during the yoga camp in Houston,





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Land sanctified for \$20 million yoga center

A vast, blooming cotton field in Rosenberg in Fort Bend County, about 25 miles from Houston, reverberated with the chanting of India's ancient Vedic scriptures amid the lighting of the holy fire Saturday morning.

History was in the making as priests and members of the Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust Houston, Inc. led by the yoga guru, Swami Ramdev, sanctified the 94-acre ground for a proposed \$20 million yoga and ayurved research center.

This will be the first international center based on the model of Pathanjali Yog Peeth in Haridwar, founded by Swami Ramdev 15 years ago.

Swami Ramdev visualized a "yoga revolution" in the western world with the proposed center, where India's culture and tradition, yoga and ayurved (Indian medicine) will be well and alive.

The ritual of worshipping the earth, symbolically seen as mother in Hindu tradition, accompanied by the holy fire, bore witness to the vow to create a "disease free world," Ramdev said.

The soil will get its "soul" when the center is established and then help serve the humanity, he said.

When the Haridwar center was established, Rs.20,000 was borrowed to start the project.

In Houston, on the first day of the project, an estimated \$20 million center is being proposed, Swami Ramdev said. Already one-fourth of the needed funds have been raised.

It took 15 years to build a team of dedicated volunteers who could run the center in Haridwar, but in Houston just in five days the organization has been established, Swami Ramdev said.

Notably, over \$2 million was raised for the project in two hours at a fund raiser in Houston on July 18.

While there was a demand from different parts of the world to house the first international Pathanjali Yog Peeth, Houstonians emerged the winners, and they are fortunate, Acharya Balkrishna, who assists Swami Ramdev in operating the Haridwar center, said.

The center would be likely to be functional within two years and it would be ideal if the center is ready to open the same day next year, he said.

One would not even know when history is in the making, he said.

Swami Chidanand Saraswati of Paramarth Niketan in Rishikesh, who also participated in the ceremony, said, unlike the TV channels which broadcast materialism, a new channel of TV show from the proposed center will relay to the world the values of peace, love, harmony, ayurved and yoga.

Swami Ramdev's concern is health for not only all human beings, but good health for all living beings, he said.

"This cotton land will one day become a culture land, spreading the spirit of India and it will be a land of happiness, health, peace and prosperity," Swami Chidananda said.

"Who knows? One day Rosenberg may come to be known as SriRamberg," he said of India's influence in different parts of the world.

Ramesh Bhutada and Shekhar Agrawal of Sugar Land, who

took Swami Ramedev's blessings and wish to have the yoga center in the Houston area, expressed the hope that in 365 days they could make the project a reality.

The vision of Swami Ramdev a year ago is now taking shape fast, Bhutada said.

Agrawal said the community would stand united and help bring the project to fruition.

Dev Mahajan of Arya Samaj of Greater Houston offered the use of the Samaj facility for immediately starting the activities of the Patanjali Yog Peeth until the new building is ready. Swami Ramdev immediately accepted the offer and promised to begin the programs.

Swami Ramdev also acknowledged a suggestion by Vijay Pallod that the youth should be actively involved in the establishment of the Patanjali Yog Peeth.

Patanjali Sewa Center headed by Vaidya K.B. Singh has already started Yog and Ayurvedic consultancy, supply of herbal supplements and sale of books and DVDs at 4023 Westhollow Parkway, Houston, TX 77077. Swami Ramdev formally dedicated the center on July 17.

The organizers of the Patanjali Yog Peeth cite many relevant factors for having it established in Houston.

For example, the National Institute of Health has a budget of \$122 million in 2008 for Complementary and Alternative Medicine research.

The National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine, has granted \$375,000 to conduct a study about the effects of yoga on women's heart health.

Guided by Swami Ramdevji's mantra of a disease free world and 'Good health is humanity's birth right,' our vision is to develop Houston center as a major center in the western world to impart various aspects of Vedic culture and custom with emphasis on Yog and Ayurved, Agrawal and Bhutada said.

A yoga teacher training center and a clinic to treat chronic ailments with the alternative, herbal medicine will be among the services offered in the center, set to open in 2009.

The project includes housing for active seniors and retirees. A herbal garden and a retreat center are also on the drawing table.

Below, Volunteers at the Houston yoga camp take group picture with Swami Ramdev after the successful conclusion of the event.



Priests from Arya Samaj of Greater Houston conduct the ritual of sanctifying the land in the presence of Swami Ramdev and Swami Chidanand Sraswati at Rosenberg, near Sugar Land.



Donor families and members at the Rosenberg site after performing the Bhoomi Puja on July 19.



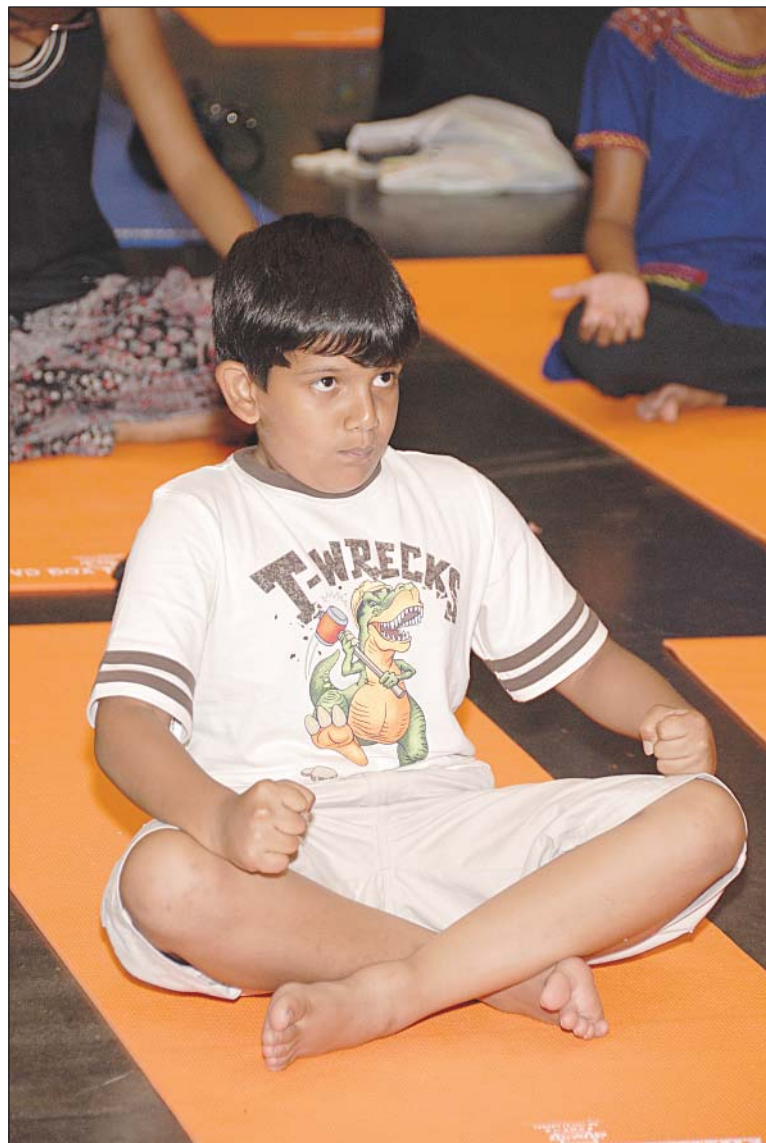
Acharya Balkrishna, left, and Swami Ramdev stand on the cotton field in Rosenberg where a \$20 million yoga research center will be built.



Yoga for the youth and children



More than 1,000 children attended a special workshop hosted by Swami Ramdev, again an unprecedented turnout, on July 19. This was an additional event as more than 2,000 people attended the morning workshop for five days from July 16 to 20, from 6 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. and learned the benefits of breathing exercises demonstrated by Swami Ramdev. The exercise regimen included about 10 percent of physical exercise and 90 percent breathing exercises.— Photos by Bijay Dixit.



A young yoga practitioner holds breath before exhaling during a workshop at the George R. Brown Convention Center.



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