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Hindu-American leaders call for political engagement in US

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WASHINGTON: The Hindu American leaders in the US have called for active political engagement of the community in the country after the election of various members among them in the state and local elections recently.

"Dozens (of Hindu Americans) are contesting elections and hundreds are following in their footsteps," said Kumar Bharve, the first Indian-American elected to any state legislature in the US, as he referred to the presence of four Hindus in the House of Representatives and the election of several people in states and local elections past week.

The US has granted incredible opportunities, said Aruna Miller, member of the Maryland State legislature. This provides incredible responsibility to serve the society towards peace, said Miller, who is running for US House of Representatives next year. Both were speaking at the

first anniversary celebrations of the American Hindu Coalition (AHC). Maryland State legislature in a citation recognised the first anniversary of American Hindu Coalition.

"Wherever we are, we must pursue political power," said Shekhar Tiwari, chair of the American Hindu Coalition.

A political bipartisan organisation, AHC's mission is to promote a shared commitment of American Hindus for a prosperous, safer and a stronger America, said Harsh Sethi, AHC president. Gurinder Singh Khalsa, from Indiana-based Sikhs Political Action Committee emphasised on the need to be engaged in politics.

According to some estimates, America Hindus accounted for about 1 per cent of the total US population. Hindus never thought that they are religious as such. But they are all humans, said Chinna Jeeyar Swami.

Diplomats from about a dozen countries participated in the event.

Mahbub Hassan Saleh, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Bangladesh to the US, the ultimate objectives of the organisations lie AHC is to build bridges among the communities and across the countries. Bangladesh has the third largest Hindu community in the world.

Hindus and Buddhist communities are making significant contribution to the economic development of the US, said Soorooj Phooker Mauritius Ambassador, adding that they would help further strengthen ties between US and Mauritius.

The Trinidad and Tobago Ambassador Brig Gen (rtd) Anthony W J Philips Spencer, said 16 per cent of the country's population are Hindus and the Caribbean nation boasts one of the diverse population in the region.

Diplomats from Myanmar, Guyana, India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Indonesia were also present at the first anniversary celebration of AHC.