Primate of the Church of India receives Russian state award



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On December 12th, the Russian Embassy in New Delhi, India, hosted an award ceremony that marked the presentation of a high state decoration of the Russian Federation – the Order of Friendship – to the Primate of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III.

On behalf of the Russian President, Mr Denis Alipov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of India, handed over the award to the Primate of the Malankara Church. Among those who attended the ceremony were Metropolitan Yuhanon Mar Chrisostomos of the Niranam Diocese, secretary of the Malankara Church's Holy Synod; Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Demetrios, president of the Department of Ecumenical Relations of the Malankara Church; Priest

Ashwin Fernandis, executive director of the Ecumenical Relations Department; Priest Dimitry Kulakov, rector of the Parish of the Holy Apostle Thomas in New Delhi; as well as representatives of a number of countries' diplomatic corps, Indian statesmen and public figures, and the clergy of the Malankara Church.

Ambassador Denis Alipov delivered a greeting speech, in which he said in particular: "The Order of Friendship awarded to the Primate of the Malankara Church serves as a sign of the Russian state's appreciation for his immeasurable contribution to the strengthening of relationships between the peoples of India and Russia, constituting an important part of which is the dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church." The Russian Ambassador emphasized the efforts of His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III aimed at developing the Church of India's social ministry, maintaining fraternal relations between the Orthodox and the Oriental Churches, and promoting Orthodoxy in India and other countries.

The Primate of the Malankara Church greeted all those present in Russian, expressing gratitude to the President of the Russian Federation, Mr Vladimir Putin, for the high award. His Holiness said in particular: "The work carried out by the head of the Russian state in strengthening international relations and the role of the Church in the spiritual life of society reflect such a vision that is beyond any boundaries. May the Lord grant him wisdom and strength in his work."

Sharing with those present his recollections of the years of his studies at the Leningrad Theological Academy (1977-1979), the Primate of the Church of India expressed gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', who at that time had served as the Academy's rector, and to Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of blessed memory, who in the second half of the 20th century initiated admission of Indian students to the theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church. With special warmth, His Holiness spoke about **his visit to Russia in 2023** and **his meeting** with the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. "My visit to Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church left an indelible impression in my heart. The Russian Church was always a beacon of strong faith and traditions in times of affliction and joy. And under the spiritual guidance of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill it continues to inspire millions of people," His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III said. In his speech, the Primate of the Malankara Church also dwelt on the relationship between the Russian and the Malankara Churches and its active development, and on the latest bilateral projects, including those carried out by **Saint Alexis Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow** and **St Gregorios Medical Mission Hospital in Parumala**. His Holiness also mentioned the **sacred music concerts** of the Combined Choir of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius Lavra and the Moscow Theological Academy which took place in India in November 2024.

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