

## White House dinner was magnificent, says Manmohan

If US President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle wanted to charm their Indian guests at the first state dinner of his presidency, they appear to have succeeded hugely. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was lavish in his praise of the White House banquet Tuesday, calling it 'magnificent' and 'one of the best dinners I have attended'.

'It was a unique experience. The dinner was lavish and extravagant. The atmosphere and the layout was outstanding,' Manmohan Singh said while sharing his first impressions of the state dinner with the Indian media after flying in from Washington Thursday.

Obama hosted the first state dinner of his presidency Tuesday night for Manmohan Singh at an elegantly designed white tent erected on the South Lawn of the White House that was attended by top Obama aides, powerful senators, Hollywood moguls, billionaire tycoons, and prominent Indian Americans. T

The grand and glamor-filled state dinner was choreographed to send the powerful message that the US saw India as an 'indispensable partner' in handling global challenges of the 21st century.

'President Obama and his wife laid out one of the best dinners and went out of the way. The people who had come in and the gathering in itself is a statement,' said Manmohan Singh, visibly impressed with all-out efforts by the Obama administration to put on an unforgettable show in Washington Tuesday.

'It was a great experience and I enjoyed being there. It was one of the best dinners that I have attended,' he said.

'There was a gathering of many distinguished guests in the dinner. People who are eminent and form the crust of the society. It was a pleasure to meet them all and be in their company,' said Manmohan Singh when asked what will be the lasting memory he will treasure from Tuesday's dinner.

'The dinner was magnificent and it was my pleasure to have attended the same. In the dinner there were a number of people of Indian origin who have made a mark on their own. A number of distinguished Indians who have done us proud,'

'This in itself is reflective of President Obama's personality. In this gathering of distinguished people, specially people of Indian origin, I felt proud to be an Indian,' he said.

Among the prominent Indian-Americans who attended the power do were Indra Nooyi, the CEO of PepsiCo, Rajat Gupta of McKinsey fame, Vishakha Desai, president of Asia Society, Kamla Harris, district attorney of San Francis district, hotelier Sant Chatwal and Sonal Shah, an economist who heads Obama's office of social innovation.

*Manish Chand* ( © IANS / India eNews)