

Very excited for International Yoga Day: UN Chief Ban Ki-moon to Sushma Swaraj

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New York: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has expressed his excitement at the first International Day of Yoga during his meeting with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, saying the day has garnered "unprecedented" enthusiasm from people around the world.

Mr Ban called on Ms Swaraj in New York yesterday at the Manhattan hotel where the Indian leader is staying. He warmly greeted her with a "Namaste, kya haal chaal hain" as he shook her hands.

Mr Ban, accompanied by senior UN officials, congratulated Ms Swaraj on the commemoration of the first International Day of Yoga.

"I am also very much excited," he said.

The UN chief told her that the world body had been observing many international days on various themes but the excitement and enthusiasm for the yoga day is unprecedented.

"(There is) a lot of enthusiasm. We have been observing many international days on something but this one (yoga day) is unprecedented, most exciting," he said.

Mr Ban said he had been told that nearly two billion people would have participated in the yoga day across the world by the end of June 21.

Ms Swaraj informed the UN chief that 192 countries, with the only exception of Yemen, will be commemorating yoga day.

Mr Ban also thanked Ms Swaraj for the "excellent arrangement" and hospitality during his visit to India in January this year.

He said he had the opportunity to meet PM Narendra Modi again in Seoul in May.

Ms Swaraj exchanged pleasantries with the UN chief. Spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar also met Ban when the UN chief arrived to meet Ms Swaraj.

Accompanying Ms Swaraj were India's ambassador to the UN Asoke Mukerji, deputy permanent representative Bhagwant Bishnoi and other senior Indian officials.

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