

AIF's mantra: Bridge digital divide

SAM RAO

Santa Clara, Calif.

THE American India Foundation (AIF) held its 5th Summit at the INTEL Auditorium in Santa Clara on June 2. A number of industry leaders and entrepreneurs deliberated on ways to improve schools in India and also shared the lessons they learnt in their efforts to bridge the digital divide in India. Encouraged by INTEL CEO Paul Otellini, who identified India as the next powerhouse in innovation and future of the globe after a recent visit to the country, AIF tied up with INTEL's Emerging Markets program and the INTEL Foundation to present the Digital Equalizer Program plan for schools in India at the summit.

AIF President Lata Krishnan set off the summit by briefly explaining AIF role in raising funds as a grant making foundation with a focus on the topic of the summit: "Harnessing Technology for Social Change" with an emphasis on AIF's Digital Equalizer program. Entrepreneur Vinod Dham, AIF Board member and Chair DE Council, and also one of the key members of the INTEL Pentium development team for 16 years, introduced the DE program, while outlining the current state of AIF

programs in India. The foundation's Regional Director, Mythili Sankaran and Director of the DE program, spoke in detail about the massive need for digital technology in schools in India based on a 2002 survey. The survey showed that less than 0.5 percent of 1.1 million schools in India had an IT infrastructure of any kind. Moreover, Sankaran revealed that barely 2 percent of the population in India had access to a personal computer. She added that the DE program has touched 170 schools in 12 States with 6,000 teachers trained till last year. The foundation plans to reach out to 400 more schools by the end of this year. Said she: "Our goal is ambitious, to increase the program 10 times to touch 5,000 schools in two years."

A round-table discussion, titled "Bringing digital technology out of the closet into the streets", too was held during the summit. Moderated by Moira Gunn, the panelists included Dr Rafiq Dossani of Stanford University; Ed Granger, Founder of iEarn, a worldwide network to enhance learning via internet; Jim Fructerman, Founder Benetech, promoting social responsible innovation; Artificial Intelligence and Robotics guru Dr Raj Reddy, Carnegie Mellon University; Bangalore-based Srikanth Nadhamuni of eGovernments;

and Coleen Wilcox, the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools. In a well-moderated panel, the speakers shared their experiences and the vision, reiterating the need to focus on comprehensive approach rather than a piecemeal approach to the problem of digital education and the useful services provided to the masses.

Another round of discussion, titled "Sharing a Vision towards Digital inclusion" was organized at the summit, which included Deepak Kapur, INTEL, GM of Emerging Markets; INTEL's William Agastein; Radha Basu, Supportsoft; Michael Yutrzenka, CISCO; and Keshav Prasad of Applied Materials as the panelists. The panelists agreed that only the latest rugged-sized computers and software were the answer and no second-hand used computers would suffice. Dham, who was invited to be a part of this panels as well, spoke about moving towards LINUX and Open source software as a way to encourage innovation, as well as keeping costs down.

Talat Hasan, Board member of AIF, closed the session reiterating that that by enhancing AIF's Digital Equalizer program, the next generation of kids both in the US and India could work together and come up with a solution to problems including (better) e-governance etc."

DIRECTV rides on cricket

SUJEET RAJAN

New York

GETTING the rights for the ICC Champions Trophy, to be held in India in October 2006 and the ICC Cricket World Cup, to be played in the West Indies in March 2007, has clearly established DIRECTV as the "clear destination" for cricket lovers in the US, says Anu Babber, Senior Manager, International Programming, DIRECTV.

"We offer more cricket than anybody else," said Babber in an interview to *The Indian Express*, talking of the fact that DIRECTV has continued to telecast international matches from across the globe on a pay-per-view of series and seasonal basis. DIRECTV has rights to matches played in six of the 10 Test playing nations in the world. "We have continued to add more cricket and we will continue to add more cricket," he added.

Asked why DIRECTV has not secured rights to telecast cricket matches played in India on a consistent basis, Babber said apart from the rights being "exorbitantly expensive," cricket played in India is "the most inappropriate time" to watch it here in the US. "For cricket lovers in the US, when India plays outside India, it is more suitable time-wise," says Babber, pointing out that the current tour of India in the West Indies for US viewers is at day-time.

Since late 2004, DIRECTV has been offering customers in the US access to cricket matches via the DIRECTV CricketTicket™ package, the first-ever, year-long subscription TV package for international cricket.

All other international programming is being offered through DIRECTV's WorldDirect™ platform, which features 39 channels that deliver a wide variety of new programming in multiple foreign languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati and Bengali.

DIRECTV customers need to use a WorldDirect services satellite dish that is capable of receiving both international and English-language programming. In some markets, customers who subscribe to a local channels package will require a second smaller dish. Talking of the threat of piracy that cuts into their subscriber base, Babber says that the biggest concern for DIRECTV was some businesses that illegally stream live matches on the Internet. "We plan to go after them and take them to court," said Babber, without divulging details. He said that the telecast rates and other promotional offers for the World Cup would be finalized in the next few weeks.

On DIRECTV getting the co-exclusive rights for the World Cup, along with DISH Network, Babber said it augured well for cricket lovers in the US, who would be able to relish the games in all parts of the country.

"The important thing is for cricket to expand and flourish in the US," said Babber.

15 arrested for sexually abusing 'immigrants'

SUJEET RAJAN

New York

THE Federal police has busted a smuggling ring that brought illegal immigrants from India across the US-Canada border and into Seattle and sexually abused some of their female clients, reported the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

At least 15 people have been indicted so far on smuggling and conspiracy charges in the cases, involving the passage of dozens of immigrants across the border into Eastern Washington, said the report. Assistant US Attorney Lisca Borichewski said five female immigrants had been raped or sexually abused by members of the ring last month while they were at a house and at a hotel in Kent.

Immediately following the detention hearing for two alleged smugglers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials asked the public for help in finding a fugitive former Sikh priest—Harchand Singh. Singh is accused of being a member of the ring and is suspected to be traveling with one of the illegal immigrants—a 17-year-old girl.

"We are concerned about the woman who does not speak English and was smuggled into the US," ICE Deputy Special Agent in Charge Mike McCool said. From 2001 to 2003, Harchand served as an assistant priest at Gurudwara Singh Sabha in Washington. Temple president Harinderpaul Singh Bains said Harchand was fired about three years ago for disciplinary reasons.



(From right) Councilwoman Carol Ehrlich with Rainbow Group members Albert Jassani and Pinesh Patel at a fundraiser at the Royal Albert Palace. Woodbridge will be celebrating American Independence Day with fireworks after a gap of three decades. Thanks to Jassani, who raised more than \$30,000 at the fundraiser. There has been no fireworks on July 4 since 1976 due to lack of funds. "This is not my dream. This is the peoples' dream. They are not my fireworks, it's meant for the public," Jassani said at the gathering. The event is scheduled for July 3 at the Alvin P. Williams Memorial Park in Sewaren. ENS

Tangra Wok lauded for serving best Indian-Chinese cuisine

IN recent articles published by several newspapers, Tangra Wok has been regarded as the best Indian-Chinese restaurant which serves authentic Indian-Chinese food in New York City. Most of the newspapers have praised the food, the service as well as the ambiance of the restaurant. The prices are reasonable and the eclectic taste attracts customers from even New Jersey, Connecticut and Long Island on a regular basis.

For lunch parties on weekdays, Tangra Wok has a steal Lunch Special serving non-vegetarian at \$7.95 (chicken and lamb) per person and vegetarian for \$6.95. The soup section has a choice of 11 soups that range from sweet corn vegetarian soup to seafood soup. The appetizers epitomize the fusion cuisine at its best with crispy rolls, gobi manchurian, chicken lollipop and shrimp with pepper salt among the choicest



for a party blast.

For the vegetarians Tangra Wok offers 15 choices of entrees starting from chili fried cauliflower, eggplant with spinach in szechwan sauce, paneer manchurian, paneer szechwan, ending with the delightful vegetables ball

manchurian. For the connoisseurs of non-vegetarian food, the choice is vast. Starting with 12 chicken entree choices, there are eight lamb entrees, four Thai specials and 12 seafood entree choices. The magic of the restaurant lies not in the number of choices but in the choicest dishes that Indian Chinese cuisine can conjure up.

Party up with chilli chicken, chicken manchurian or Tangra Wok's special chicken having a mix of spices smeared over cooked chicken. Add some lamb items like shredded lamb in hot garlic sauce or lamb manchurian. For Thai dishes, try ginger chicken or basil chicken. For seafood addicts, enjoy an exciting chili fish entree, or szechwan shrimp or even sweet N sour shrimp. For the adventurous, there is hot garlic shrimp or the red snapper/pomfret in chef's special sauce.

Have a side dish of chilli garlic noodles or fried rice or both. Looking for a drink? Try the mango lassi, an exotic drink made with mangoes and yogurt. Looking to celebrate in style? Try Tangra Wok's collection of wines and beer. The restaurant has a full bar and serves Indian beer and exotic wines.

For all parties the lasting taste of sweet dessert melts into the consciousness. Try the famous *rasmalai* or the *gulabjamun* and for ice-cream lovers, a choice of pistachio, vanilla and strawberry ice-creams await their pleasure.

So, why wait? Call Tangra Wok at 718-275-0417 to reserve for your next dinner or party.

Please note that Tangra Wok is only located in Rego Park, Queens. It does not have any branches. By train you can reach it on an 'R' or 'V' train to Rego Park 63rd Drive Station.

Advertorial

