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INDIAWEST

Trade Meet Explores Opportunities in India

By **PARIMAL M. ROHIT**
Special to **India-West**

CERRITOS, Calif. — About 200 trade experts and business executives convened at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts here June 23 to discuss India's burgeoning import-export market.

Presented by the Port of Los Angeles, Network of Indian Professionals, the U.S. Commercial Service, and Quanta Consulting, the 4th Annual India Trade Conference had the theme of "Trade and Humanity," focusing on new opportunities and trends in India as well as global risk mitigation, financing, Green Tech, social entrepreneurship and the finer nuances of logistics and trade.

The full-day conference featured 23 speakers spread out over six panel sessions and a morning keynote address.

Lead organizer R. Sampath, managing director of Quanta Consulting, said the iron of In-

dian trade is hot and the time to seek opportunities is now, which is why events like the India Trade Conference is needed to help industry insiders navigate the burgeoning business.

"There is more of a sense of urgency in India, where projects move faster, not just in government circles but in the public-private spaces as well. Also helpful is the expedited anti-corruption initiatives with the Government of India, leading to more equitable and favorable environment for U.S. companies," he told **India-West**.

"ITC is the only annual event in Southern California dedicated to India trade, markets (and) sourcing (strategy and execution)."

Sampath added there are several economic sectors, beyond jewelry and computers, experiencing rapid growth, such as raw metals, renewable energy, water treatment, below poverty line segment and fundamental infrastructure needs, in which companies may seek to invest.



Dr. Subhash Sharma (left) of Bangalore's Indus Business Academy talks about the importance of understanding culture while conducting export-import affairs in India as conference organizer R. Sampath listens, at the 4th Annual Trade India Conference in Cerritos, Calif. (Parimal Rohit photo)

Opening remarks by Cerritos Mayor Carol Chen, UPS's Central California district president Noel Massie and California State Board of Equalization's Jerome

E. Horton set the tone for the entire conference, stressing the need for investors and traders to pay attention to intangible issues, such as cultural nuances

and professional repute.

Massie said that the level of trust locals will have in foreign traders is directly tied to whether

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Educational Initiatives Highlighted at AAHOA Convention

By **SUMIT PURI**
Special to **India-West**

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — The casinos, the Venetian, Palazzo and Sands Expo Convention halls here bustled with energy for four days as the Asian American Hotel Owners Association held its annual Convention and Trade Show June 15 to 18.

With more than 3,500 Indian Americans in attendance, and more than 1,300 exhibitors participating in the trade show, it was by far one of the largest Indian events held here this year.

This year's convention theme was "Leading Together, Taking Action," which "captures the unique spirit and momentum of AAHOA as we move forward to new challenges and new successes," ChandraKant "CK" Patel, the organization's outgoing chairman who will be succeeded by current vice-chairman Hemant Patel, stated in the welcome note.

Most of the educational sessions held during the course of the convention focused on issues related to banking, credit availability, foreclosures, rising fuel costs, etc., as industry members are still suffering the harsh effects of the recession that has made it

difficult for entrepreneurs and small businesses to survive.

AAHOA works hard for its members, and its board is powerful enough to influence legislation. For example, Sanmukh (Sam) Swami, owner of Best Western Fort Myers Inn & Suites in Florida, explained how AAHOA helped to reduce fees for putting up the hotel logo on the state's freeways exit signs by as much as 300 percent.

"The fees for putting the hotel logo on exit signs got reduced from \$4,000 to a mere \$1,400 just because of AAHOA," Swami said.

"Education has always been a primary focus of AAHOA and its members," Hitesh (HP) Patel, the organization's director-at-large, told **India-West**, as he expounded on "The AAHOA Educational Experience," the recent education program that airs on Sahara One television every Sunday.

Additionally, AAHOA's YouTube channel will provide AAHOA members with the necessary professional education without having to wait for regional meetings or the annual convention.

"Fair franchising is one of the important programs that we pursue for our members. This year is big on banking-related issues

because of the economy" Patel told **India-West**.

"Every year the organization is evolving, becoming well-organized and more professional. It is amazing to see that even the

second generation of people have started coming on the AAHOA board," said treasurer Alkesh "Al" Patel.

"I am impressed by the quality of speakers AAHOA had this

year," said Jay Patel, a long-time attendee of AAHOA conventions.

Among the various educational sessions were major ones like

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Members of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association gathered to attend the group's annual Convention and Trade Show June 15-18 at the Venetian in Las Vegas, Nevada. (Sumit Puri photo)

Trade Conference Explores Opportunities, Trends in India

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or not they have earned their stripes.

“Credibility is a huge issue in India. You need to spend time on the ground to get to know the people and the culture,” Massie said, adding that a New York Times report stated about “40 percent of the produce in India rots before it’s eaten due to lack of adequate infrastructure.”

The conference featured six topic-specific panels ranging from general trade trends to specific opportunities in Green Tech, social entrepreneurship, renewable energy and technologies for globalization.

The panel sessions also focused on logistics and operations of India’s international trading industry, financial investments and risks, and high growth industry segments.

Among the featured panelists were key figures from Indus Business Academy, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Los Angeles World Airports, Southern California Edison, Qualcomm and Time Warner Cable, each providing valuable insight on the prospects of doing business in India.

Inder Sharma, CEO of ACL, Inc., spoke of the need of foreign companies to do due diligence before entering the Indian trade space and the need to yield at least 16 percent profit margins to survive in the export-import business.

The Indian American also stressed the need for companies to make strategic decisions in choosing who to partner with in India and to find the right market product. Sharma believes the most promising markets showing the most potential were energy and solar infrastructure, since the Indian government will be investing billions of dollars into those areas over the next decade.

Dr. Subhash Sharma, who serves as director of the Indus Business Academy in Bangalore, spoke from a macro perspective of the need to understand the home country’s culture when seeking to establish trade rela-

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R. Sampath of Quanta Consulting talks about some of the upcoming panels featured at the 4th Annual Indian Trade Conference.



Filmmaker Sabina Shamdasani (left) and Rajiv Parmar of Talus Networks discuss various topics of trade opportunities in India during one of the networking sessions. (Parimal Rohit photos)

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Joseph Tosto (l) of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce explains to an attendee some of the finer nuances of India trade relations.