Indian Journalists Visit Central Florida

Journalists from several Indian news organizations participated in an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) visit to the Orlando area in April. The local schedule of activities was organized and facilitated by the World Affairs Council of Central Florida.

Hailing from the Indian states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the journalists spent two weeks in various cities across the United States. They gleaned insights into the broad issue of U.S. foreign policy, as well as specific topics such as international trade, counter-terrorism, climate change and the environment, and gender-based violence. The visitors included Sunitha Natti, Special Correspondent in Business, The New Indian Express; Prithvi Raju Ponnuru, Assistant Editor, Sakshi; Bala Gangadhar Tilak Tummala, Chief Sub Editor, Eenadu; and Venkata Gunneswara Rao Undralla, News Editor, TV5 Telugu News Channel.

During the Central Florida portion of the journalists’ stay, they met with various organizations, among them UCF offices such as The India Center, the Global Perspectives Office, the Terrorism Studies Program and the Human Trafficking Awareness Program. John C. Bersia, Special Assistant to the President for Global Perspectives and co-chair of The India Center, hosted a working lunch for the group, and addressed U.S. relations with Asia. Ted Reynolds, Senior Research Fellow in Terrorism Studies, answered questions about political violence and its connections to human trafficking.

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As a fellow at The India Center, I had the opportunity to explore politics, economy, culture and technology in India. During the course of my fellowship semester, I focused on India’s ongoing and turbulent relationship with Pakistan. The required weekly briefs and blog posts allowed me to obtain a greater understanding of current events in India, and helped enhance my writing and analytical skills. I highly recommend the fellowship at The India Center to anyone who would like to improve his or her research, writing and analytical skills. Through this fellowship, students have the opportunity to learn about a diverse country that has quickly become a key player in the international community.

- Jelena Zupancic, Spring 2016 India Fellow
Asian Cultural Association Hosts Master Percussionists

On Saturday, April 9, 2016, the Asian Cultural Association (ACA) presented a performance by Zakir Hussain and The Masters of Percussion. The India Center at UCF was a partner in this event.

The group of five musicians used a variety of northern and southern Indian percussion and melodic instruments for a Hindustani percussion performance. Several hundred audience members gathered in the Bob Carr Theater in downtown Orlando for this collaborative and explorative recital.

Prior to the show, attendees were treated to a special event in the theater’s lobby. Participants in the Reliable Advocacy for People with Intellectual Disabilities (RAPID) Program have been immersed in an ACA-supported initiative aimed at improving their knowledge, experience and overall enjoyment of music. This group presented its very first musical performance in a 10-minute session as guests arrived. Before introducing the program, ACA representatives showed the audience a video detailing the partnership between ACA and RAPID.

The evening’s main performance included a variety of solos, improvisation and lessons in the history of the music and instruments used. The “masters” alongside Hussain were Anantha Krishnan, Sabir Khan, Navin Sharma and Mannargudi Vasadevan. Khan played the sarangi, a North Indian string instrument, which formed the base for the percussionists to improvise.

Throughout the performance, Hussain explained some history of Indian percussion and showcased pieces that have been passed down through the years. One such piece used drums to imitate the sound of a railway train passing through the countryside. Hussain also demonstrated how to turn phrases and sentiments into percussion, using his drums to invite the audience to take a seat, have a drink or something to eat and enjoy the show. From beginning to end, Zakir Hussain and The Masters of Percussion delivered a celebration of music and culture.