

6th Season of South Asian Spelling Bee Launched

Touchdown Media Inc., on June 11 launched the sixth season of the MetLife South Asian Spelling Bee at an event held at Bombay Palace restaurant in New York City. MetLife, a global provider of life insurance and other financial services, returns as the title sponsor of the contest.

"It's great to be celebrating the sixth year of the South Asian Spelling Bee," Rahul Walia, CEO of Touchdown Media Inc. and founder of the Bee said at the June 11 event. "With the help of our sponsors and media partners, a great platform has been built for the community where spellers can test their skill and have the thrill of being on television," he added. The Bee has expanded to 12 cities across the U.S., Walia said, noting that over these past few years the group has seen "some amazing talent develop."

Also in attendance at the event was Arvind Mahankali, winner of the 2103 Scripps National Spelling Bee; Dnyaneshwar Mulay, consul general of India in New York; as well as representatives from the Bee's sponsor companies. Mahankali, 13, who has been a finalist in the 2009, 2010 and 2011 South Asian Spelling Bee, was accompanied by his parents Srinivas and Bhavani Mahankali and his 9-year-old brother Srinath.



At the launch event of the 6th Annual South Asian Spelling Bee, seen from left, Rahul Walia, CEO, Touchdown Media Inc. & Founder of 'The South Asian Spelling Bee'; Doug Anderson, School Relations Manager, C2 Education; Ginger Jones, Global Brand and Marketing, MetLife; Jaideep Janakiram, Head – North America, Sony Entertainment Networks; Neeraj Arora, EVP, International Business, Sony Entertainment Networks; Amit Ray, National Sales Head, Air India (Photo Courtesy: Freelance US Media/Vijay Shah)

"MetLife is pleased to serve once again as the title sponsor of the South Asian Spelling Bee competition," said Laurel Daring, assistant vice president, Diverse

Markets at MetLife. "This event allows youth from across the country to test their spelling skills in a national forum that can provide a tremendous boost toward fulfill-

ing a student's educational aspirations, she said, adding, "By challenging themselves in this manner, all of the participating students can see the potential that can be unlocked through hard work, talent and dedication."

Along with MetLife, airline major Air-India and education company C2Education have also come on board as sponsors for this event. Sony Entertainment Television Asia continues as the exclusive broadcast partner and will be airing the series across 120 countries.

The event is open to children of South Asian descent up to 14 years of age. Regional events will be held in Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Seattle, Atlanta, Washington, D.C. Metro, New Jersey, New York and Boston starting June 15. Each competition will begin with a written test of 25 words. The participants must spell 15 or more words correctly to advance to the afternoon oral round, which will be conducted by experienced pronouncers and judges. The top three in the oral round will receive prize money. The top two spellers of each regional competition will advance to the finals to be held in New Jersey in August. Like last year, MetLife has inducted the \$10,000 champion's scholarship that will be awarded to the winner at the finals.

Four Leading Asianet channels launch exclusively on DISH

DISH, one of the nation's leading pay-TV providers, June 14 announced the launch of Asianet, Asianet Plus, Asianet News and Asianet Movies to its lineup. As the U.S. leader in international programming with more than 280 ethnic channels in 29 languages, DISH is the exclusive satellite pay-TV platform to offer this leading Malayalam-language content. Additionally, DISH's broadcast of Asianet Movies marks the U.S. premiere of this popular Malayalam film channel.

"We are pleased to exclusively offer this programming on satellite and proud to debut Asianet Movies for the first time in the U.S.," said Sruta Vootukuru, director of international programming at DISH. "DISH has long offered an impressive South Asian channel lineup, and we are dedicated to the consistent pursuit of the best news and entertainment tailored to a variety of language groups."

Commenting on the launch, Managing Director of ASIANET COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED,

K Madhavan stated, "When Asianet entered the US market in 2003, our overarching goal was to expand the presence of our special programming. Partnering with DISH to launch the Asianet channels allows us to realize this dream of providing yet another incredible addition to the lineup of Malayalam content in the United

States".

The Malayalam Asianet programming package is now available to customers for \$24.99 per month. Effective June 20, all Malayalam: Mega Pack or Surya a la carte customers will be eligible to subscribe to Asianet as an add-on package for a monthly price of \$15. Asianet channel descriptions are listed below.

Asianet (channel 784) is the leading Malayalam-language general entertainment channel with a wide variety of popular family, teen and children's programming, including movies, music, soaps, reality and talk shows.

Asianet Plus (channel 785) features entertaining movies, reality shows and music programming for the whole family.

Asianet News (channel 787) is the top Malayalam news channel, with a strong team of experienced journalists and an extensive network of news bureaus. As one of the oldest news channels in India, Asianet News stands tall amid the clutter of Kerala news stations as the most trusted source for timely information.

Asianet Movies (channel 788) is a new and only 24-hour channel devoted to showcasing Malayalam movies.

To learn more or to order the Asianet programming package, call 888-229-8173 or visit www.DISHMalayalamTV.com

Friends of Gujarat to organize 3-day Gujarati meet

Friends of Gujarat is organizing a Global Gujarati Conference at the Raritan Center, Edison, New Jersey from August 30 to September 1. The event has been named 'Bhavya ane Divya Gujarat'.

Speaking to Desi Talk, Kirit Patel, president of Friends of Gujarat said that the aim of

will also showcase their exhibits."

According to Patel, "apart from the usual business, religious seminars, yoga, health camp and full body checkup and vastu, the thrust will be on provide pure entertainment to the participating public. We will have the Gujarati dayro and cultural program but at the same time we plan to have



Members of Friends of Gujarat at the kick-off party.

organizing this event was to keep the Gujarati culture alive within the second generation of Gujaratis who have made America their new home.

"We intend to provide them the necessary platform to know what Gujarat is, how it has emerged as a land of opportunity in India and at the same time keeping the traditional Gujarati value intact", Kirit said adding, "the conference will also be a launching pad to exchange ideas of economic, business success stories between the younger generation in Gujarat and their counterpart settled in the USA". The conference will also have the trade show, fashion show and many vendors from Gujarat

one Bollywood night comprising Hindi songs, and plans are being worked out to have a Gujarati play also."

Several delegates, leaders of business fraternity Gujarat Chambers of commerce along with their women and youth wing, state government agencies IndexB, are scheduled to participate. Plans are afoot to hold networking between Gujarat government agencies and local businessmen to set up units in Gujarat and also get expert guidance of make success stories.

As always Chief Minister Narendrabhai Modi will also address the gathering through video link.

CRY to Host Cricket Tournament in New York

CRY, Child Rights and You, America Inc., will host a cricket tournament at Cunningham Park in Oakland Gardens, N.Y., June 22. The New York Metro area CRYket 2013 will include 16 teams with eight participants each, according to a press release issued by CRY. The group organizes similar cricketing events

across multiple cities in the U.S., the release said. Established in 2002, CRY is a non-profit organization driven by its vision of a just world in which all children have equal opportunities and works towards restoring the full spectrum of human rights to underprivileged children for a happy and healthy childhood.