

Akshay Patra bags prestigious TECH Award

SAM RAO

San Jose, Calif.

THE prestigious TECH Awards, celebrating the power of technology to address global challenges in environment, economic development, education, equality and health were awarded at a gala banquet at the San Jose Convention Center on November 19. Along with the annual Tech Awards that honor five international innovators with \$250,000, selected from a shortlisted group of nominees, the James C. Morgan Global Humanitarian Award was bestowed on Nobel Laureate and former Vice-President Al Gore. The awards are sponsored by Applied Materials and named after the company Chairman Emeritus James Morgan. Gore was selected for the Global Humanitarian Award for his international work on environmental affairs and raising global awareness of climate change. During the gala, 15 innovators from around the world were also recognized for applying technology in practical ways to benefit humanity. Of these, five were awarded \$50,000 cash prizes each before a capacity crowd of more than 1,500 people, including Silicon Valley industry giants, philanthropists and political leaders.

"The Laureates' awe-inspiring innovations are a powerful incentive for us to consider our individual responsibility to contribute to positive change around the world," said Peter Friess, president of The Tech Museum.



Left: Akshaya Patra USA CEO & President Madhu Sridhar and Chairman Desh Deshpande with Applied Materials CEO Michael R. Splinter; Right: former Vice-President Al Gore received the 2009 James C. Morgan Global Humanitarian award. *Charlotte Fiorito*

"Tonight we have seen what happens when we harness the very best of ourselves with the express purpose of developing innovative ideas for a more promising future." The Microsoft Education Award went to the School Meals Program, Akshaya Patra Foundation, Intel Environment Award went to Cows to Kilowatts, Dr. Joseph Adelegan, the BD Biosciences Economic Development Award went to Alternative Energy for Empowerment, The Katherine M. Swanson Equality Award went to Fair Wage Guide Software, World of Good Development Organization, and the Nokia Health Award went to Ultra Rice PATH.

Madhu Sridhar, president and CEO of Akshaya Patra, and Desh Deshpande, Board president, accepted the award on behalf of Akshaya Patra Foundation and its School Meals Program, where high quality, nutritious food is provided using high-tech and efficient kitchen



technology and a cost-effective food delivery system to serve millions of Indian children a daily meal. Sridhar was visibly excited to receive the trophy on behalf of the numerous volunteers, including hard working kitchen workers responsible for getting meals ready and delivered to the children. "All of them put in a great effort across 33 kitchens, sometimes getting up at 2:30 am to get meals ready and feed about 1.2 million kids in India. We will spend this award of \$50,000 on the program towards realizing the goal of feeding 5 million kids daily by 2020," she said. Akshaya Patra Foundation believes that high quality, calorically dense meals are the key to the education process in poverty-stricken areas and was set up by entrepreneur Desh Deshpande.

Sridhar added, "As you may recall, in September we were named a Tech Award Laureate out of over 600 applicants from 66 coun-

tries. Three Laureates were chosen in each of five categories, Education being one. One winner from each category was awarded a cash prize. Several executives from prominent companies in attendance took keen interest in the Akshaya Patra story and were amazed by the program's impact. It was a great night for Akshaya Patra. We thank you all for your continued support and commitment to our shared vision. "No child shall be deprived of education because of hunger," she stressed. The Nokia Health Award winner, Ultra Rice PATH, also has a presence in India with a pilot project in Andhra Pradesh. PATH Ultra Rice is an inexpensive, nutrient-fortified additive to standard rice, tailored to satisfy deficiencies common in the region where it is distributed.

The Tech Museum in San Jose is a hands-on technology and science museum and educational resource set up to engage people in experiencing technologies affecting their lives. It celebrates the present and encourages the development of innovative ideas for a more promising future. "This is Silicon Valley's best night of the year as we celebrate and support the amazing teams and individuals who are using technology to address our planet's greatest challenges with vision, impact, creativity and passion," said Mike Splinter, CEO and Chairman of Applied Materials. "The real winners tonight are the millions of people around the world who are directly benefiting from the work of The Tech Awards Laureates."

Civil liberties groups rap anti-Muslim press meet by US Reps

SAM RAO

San Francisco, Calif.

OVER 20 national and local civil liberties organizations have issued a rousing call to four US Representatives, Congress members Rep. Myrick (R-N.C.), Rep. Shadegg (R-Ariz), Rep. Broun (R-Ga) and Rep. Franks (R-Ariz), to retract their statements against the political participation of American Muslims and in promotion of the book, 'Muslim Mafia: Inside the Secret Underworld that's Conspiring to Islamize America'. US Congress member Myrick wrote the introduction to the book.

The Asian Law Caucus, a San Francisco-based civil rights organization, spearheaded the effort after learning that the author of 'Muslim Mafia' called for a "professional and legal backlash against Muslims".

"When elected government officials extol hatred and challenge democracy, core American values are undermined," said Veena Dubal, staff attorney at the Asian Law Caucus. "The fact that these Representatives had the audacity to publicly challenge the political participation of American Muslims is reflective of the state of siege American Muslims currently live in. We

must hold our elected representatives accountable to principles of equality and freedom, and remember that these values apply to all members of our nation."

The Asian Law Caucus (ALC), American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), American Muslim Alliance (AMA), Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), Equal Justice Society (EJW), Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), Muslim Political Action Committee (MPAC), National Lawyers Guild- San Francisco Bay Area Chapter (NLG-SF), South Asian Americans Leading To-

gether (SAALT), Sikh Coalition and over a dozen other national and local organizations asked the Representatives to retract their comments concerning American Muslims and political participation.

The signatories have invited the Representatives to enter a dialogue with American Muslims about their lives and realities over the past eight years, the persisting prevalence of violations of their civil rights, the numerous hate crimes perpetrated against them, and the constant public and private discrimination that they unfairly endure.

Summer Hararah, National Se-

curity and Civil Rights Project Coordinator at the Asian Law Caucus, stated, "It is a sad day when elected representatives promote a bigoted witch hunt to intimidate Americans of the Islamic faith into silence and out of the political process.

"Our organizations believe this attempt to strong-arm obedience to political ideologies is a shameful abuse of power under the guise of national security. Fear-mongering employed with legal and governmental authority is reminiscent of McCarthyism, the internment of Japanese Americans and destruction of entire communities."

