

Press Release

The 2nd Asian Lenses Forum (TALF) deliberates on the 'Emergence of India as a Global Soft Power'

Witnesses thought provoking discussions from intellectuals on the growing significance of India and Asian countries in today's global scenario

First of its kind initiative by NIIT University to sensitize young generation to Asian heritage, culture, history and values, TALF gains wider acceptance and following

New Delhi, March 23, 2015: Established with a vision to bring about innovation in higher education and learning in emerging areas of the knowledge society, the not-for-profit NIIT University (NU) presented **The 2nd Annual Asian Lenses Forum (TALF)** conference in the capital today. With an aim to focus on India's presence in the world scenario as a rising soft power, this year's TALF Conference deliberated on the **'Emergence of India as a Global Soft Power.'**

A unique initiative by NIIT University, The Asian Lenses Form (TALF) is an outward looking coalition of committed thought leaders, opinion makers and informed youth. TALF aims to prepare the young Asian generations to find their place in this rapidly changing global environment by providing them with a deeper understanding of what it means to be Asian. As a platform it seeks to generate relevant knowledge and encourage multiple dialogues, engaging stakeholders across generations and nationalities.

The prominent speakers this year who highlighted various aspects of India as a 'soft power' were diplomat and author **Pavan Varma**; **Dr Ashok Khosla** who has written extensively on Sustainable Development; renowned Bharatanatyam dancer and author **Leela Samson**; and award-winning journalist & author of an incisive book on China – 'Smoke & Mirrors', **Pallavi Aiyar**. The conversations were anchored by **Dr Jean-Pierre Lehmann**, Professor Emeritus at IMD Lausanne, visiting Professor at NIIT University (NU) and an exceptional Asianist who has invested a majority of his scholarly pursuits in understanding Asia and globalization. Also present were **Rajendra Pawar**, Founder, NIIT University; members of the NU Board including **Harpal Singh**, Chairman Emeritus, Fortis and **Dr. Rajendra Pandey**, President, NIIT University.

The unique format of the event made the session truly engaging and intense. It showcased a new-age classroom set-up wherein the key speakers were seated on a rotating stage in the middle of the hall, with concentric circles of seating around it. This enabled eye contact between everyone in the hall, creating an opportunity to interact closely with panelists, thus stimulating a free-flowing exchange of ideas. The presentations were informal, crisp and dynamic, inviting discussion and debate on India as an emerging 'soft power.' Students from NIIT University campus in Neemrana, connected real-time to the conference through state-of-the-art technology enabled interface and asked incisive questions to the panellists.

Speaking on occasion, **Rajendra Pawar, Chairman, NIIT Ltd & Founder, NIIT University** said, *“The old world order is giving in to new and the emergence of India and Asia is being recognized across the globe. It’s not our military prowess that is being acknowledged, but the power we wield from an understanding of our rich heritage. The Asian Lenses Forum (TALF) is an attempt to enable today’s youth to appreciate and understand their legacy and draw inspiration from it.”*

“Hence for India to assert its dominance as a global soft power it is important for our youth to comprehend and recognize the legacy that nurtures this power”, added Mr. Pawar.

During the 19th and 20th centuries many of the Asian countries were colonized or otherwise subjugated by the West. The Asian mosaic of civilization was severely damaged, if not completely overwhelmed by Western imperialism. This dominance extended to every arena of economic, social and cultural life in a way that the Asian view of the world, and indeed of itself, got distorted by what one may call the Western Lens. Consequently, it would not be an overstatement to suggest that much of what Asians know of themselves is from the prism of western writers, historians and thinkers.

However, since the turn of this century, one is witnessing the emergence of a new global reality: The Resurgence of Asia. Soft power in this context is an extension of a nation’s image abroad, but also a reflection of a nation’s domestic image and vision. What do Indians, especially young Indians, think it means to be Indian? How can the sought-after global soft power impact and influence domestic policies and national psychology? The two questions, what kind of role India aspires to globally and what kind of society does it aspire to nationally are interlinked. What are the values that should define India’s national and global identity? These questions lead yet again to the issue of the Asian Lens. India has to take leadership in ensuring that today, the world looks at the continent through new, Asian Lenses and understands the region through Asian eyes.

According to **NIIT University Visiting Professor, Dr Jean-Pierre Lehmann**, *“The narrative of the 21st century will be written in Asia. An initiative such as TALF (The Asian Lenses Forum) is the need of the hour, for it is an entity that studies Asia through Asian eyes.”*

Mr. Harpal Singh, Board Member, NIIT University & Chairman Emeritus, Fortis further added, *“We are confident that TALF will go a long way in helping youth reclaim pride in their heritage and thus help establish their identity in the evolving global economy.”*

NU realizes the need and importance of developing new and potentially superior understanding rather than creating a new body of knowledge that is parochial, self-centered and narrow. Asians and citizens from other geographies must, in the future, have the opportunity to "Know" about Asians from new and alternative lenses, as they reflect and think about what kind of future they would like to build for themselves and for the global community.



TALF aims to work towards this through actionable steps and projects and aims to create out of every Asian youngster today, a responsible global citizen with a confident sense of his own identity. As a platform it seeks to generate relevant knowledge and encourage multiple dialogues, engaging stakeholders across generations and nationalities.

The 1st TALF Conference held in 2014, witnessed thought-provoking presentations from award-winning journalist and author **Pallavi Aiyar**; Member of the Planning Commission, former India Chairman of Boston Consulting Group and author **Arun Maira** and **Deepak Nayyar**, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Delhi.

About NIIT University

*Set up with the vision of being the leading center of innovation and learning in emerging areas of the Knowledge Society, the not-for-profit NIIT University is dedicated to building great careers and ensuring excellent job opportunities to all its students. It has been developed as an institution of excellence to provide exceptional education based on the **four core principles that make learning industry-linked, technology-based, research-driven and seamless.***

*The NIIT University offers **B. Tech Programs** in Computer Science Engineering, Biotechnology, Mechanical and Electronic and Communication Engineering, **M. Tech Programs** in Educational Technology, & Geographic Information Systems and **Ph.D Programs** in Humanities & Social Sciences and management in addition to all the above disciplines.*

*Dual degree integrated 5 year B. Tech - **MTech Programs** in Computer Science Electronics & Communication, Mechanical engineering, Educational Technology, Geographic Information Systems and Biotechnology are also offered by NU. These contemporary and industry-relevant programs are customized to prepare skilled professionals and researchers for high-end mobile computing and wireless, communication technology and biotechnology jobs. Highly qualified faculty, state-of-the-art laboratories, associations with research labs and research universities in USA and UK, strong wireless stimulation, performance and modeling concepts are other unique features of these programs.*

NIIT University has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Missouri - Kansas City's (UMKC) School of Computing and Engineering, to offer a 5-year program that will allow students to secure B. Tech degree from NU & and MS in Computer Science Engineering from UMKC. This is the first of its kind landmark agreement between two educational institutions to collaborate in B.Tech and MS degree programs and research activities through the exchange of degree seeking students and faculty members in the area of computer science and computer engineering.

*The University also offers an **MBA Program** (NU- MBA) designed to help aspiring professionals build meaningful connections to the real world of business and become successful leaders of the future. NU- MBA trains future CEOs to deal with the challenges and opportunities thrown up by emerging economies such as China and countries in Africa through its 'International Immersion program'. The*



University also offers industry-linked program in **MBA (Banking & Finance)** in collaboration with ICICI Bank.

NIIT University has entered into a partnership with Autodesk to promote **'Design Thinking'** as a course across all disciplines of B.Tech Programs. NIIT University has a unique 'Microsoft Innovation Centre' on campus that features the best of equipment, the latest technology & expert guidance that fosters an environment of learning & entrepreneurship on campus. **The Asian Lenses Forum** has been set-up at NIIT University to sensitize young generation and to create a sense of pride in Asian/Indian heritage, culture, history and values amongst youth. The forum will also act as a launching pad for the faculty and student bodies of NU to undertake research and disseminate knowledge about achievements and role of Asia to the world.

Vibrant social and recreational activities form the heart of Campus Life at NIIT University, with a host of student activities interspersed along the central walking spine. The Campus provides students a wide array of sports activities like volleyball, basketball, tennis, a golf putting range and gymnastics. Furnished student hostels make life comfortable for students. Temperatures are maintained at the Campus all year around using an energy-efficient, geothermal cooling system, with minimal carbon footprint. For further information please visit www.niituniversity.in.

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