

Indian-Americans asked to invest in education in India

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Washington: Entrepreneur and philanthropist Frank Islam would like fellow Indian-Americans to make a strategic investment in education in India as it is the great equalizer and opportunity creator.

"Supporting educational institutions is one of our highest priorities because education is the key to opportunity and the bridge to the future," he said during the Second American Bazaar Philanthropy Dialogue and Dinner, organised by an ethnic publication here.

Dozens of prominent philanthropists, nonprofits, stakeholders and leaders from the South Asian and Indian American philanthropic community attended the dialogue to brainstorm giving.

Lata Krishnan chair of the American India Foundation delivered the 2nd American Bazaar Philanthropy lecture.

"While education is important in America, the needs are even greater in India and that is why I am supporting initiatives in India," Islam said.

"My intent is to use education as a tool to improve the socio-economic status of the underprivileged in India. My desire is those who benefit will in turn contribute towards social, political, and economic development in India," he added.

Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, born Islam, has announced a \$2 million donation to his alma mater, Aligarh Muslim University, which "shaped my history and my journey and determined my destiny," for building the Frank and Debbie Islam School of Management.

The school, Islam said will place emphasis on entrepreneurship and preparing the students at AMU to become entrepreneurial leaders and engage in economic development activities that will create jobs and opportunities for thousands of people throughout India.

"We see our contribution not as a charity but as an investment that will yield exponential returns," he said.

"We not only support AMU, but also give to other educational institutions as well here in US and in India," said Islam who was presented the American Philanthropy award for his pioneering efforts in the fields of education arts and culture.

Receiving the award from Arun M. Kumar, US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets, Islam told fellow Indian-Americans that they had done well in the US and now it was their turn to do good in India.

"Let us together change the face of India. One family, one village and one life at a time," he said. "Let us extend our hope, our help, and our hand so that we can together change the face of the world."

Apart from AMU, Islam has made major gifts and supported scholarships at his alma mater in the US, the University of Colorado at Boulder and his wife Debbie Driesman's alma mater in Canada, Western University among others.

Underlining the importance of strategic philanthropy, Islam said: "I invest in education and promotion of the arts because these are two of those critical areas. I refer them as pivot points -areas that can be leveraged to build a bigger and better future for all."

"Education is a pivot point because it is the great equaliser and opportunity creator," he said. "Art is also a pivot point because it educates and advances social causes. Art and culture transcend all boundaries."

Islam has also given \$1 million to the US Institute of Peace, an organization devoted to nonviolent prevention and mitigation of conflict around the globe, "because it's very much engaged in curbing violent extremism."

"In addition they are engaged to make the transition to peaceful and stable democracy," he said.

- IANS