

Dinner to offer message of peace

Speaker to solicit support for special Indo-U.S. partnership; Dutra to be honored

By Melissa Evans, STAFF WRITER, THE ARGUS

FREMONT -- It takes only a few drops of cold water to temper a boiling pot.

That's the theory behind a proposed partnership between the United States and India to build universities that would teach meditation and peace-building strategies based on ancient practices and modern science.

The primary backer of the project -- which includes a 40,000-student university in India and an 8,000-student university in the United States -- will detail his plan for the first time Friday night at the third annual Unity Dinner, sponsored by the Fremont-based IndoAmerican Community Federation.

In his keynote speech, John Hagelin, a Harvard-trained quantum physicist, will solicit support for his aggressive plan to train students in the Vedic science of consciousness, a practice used to relieve stress and promote harmony by Indian practitioners for thousands of years. The approach "is specifically designed to reduce not only individual tension, but to have the maximum spillover effect into one's social environment," said Hagelin, director of the Institute of Science, Technology and Public Policy, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

The idea is that as people become more peaceful as individuals, their influence is felt by society. Criminals are not as compelled to commit acts of violence if the larger environment is peaceful, Hagelin said.

"Calm can spread throughout society just as panic can spread throughout the world," said Hagelin, a 2000 presidential candidate for the Reform/Natural Law parties who has appeared many times on syndicated programs such as NBC's "Meet the Press."

Organizers of the Unity Dinner say Hagelin's message fits perfectly with the purpose of the event, which was held for the first time after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in an effort to promote harmony and unity among cultural groups in the Bay Area.

This year's theme is to work toward bringing peace and tranquillity across the globe, said Jeevan Zutshi, founder of the Indo-American Community Federation.

Several public officials -- including federal and state representatives and local council members -- are expected to attend, along with members of various cultural groups, including Chinese, Afghan and Indo-American.

In addition to dinner, the event will feature cultural entertainment and recognition of groups and individuals who have made significant contributions to the community.

This year, the federation will honor Assemblyman John Dutra, D-Fremont, as Legislator of the Year. Dutra will step down in January 2005 because of term limits.

"(Dutra) has done an exceptional job serving our community," Zutshi said.

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