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# ATEA's EMERGE 2022 Conference



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## Prakash Narayan-



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The inauguration of the American Tamil Entrepreneurs Association's (ATEA) South Central chapter happened on Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at the Mesquite Convention Center (15 miles east of Dallas). With the lilting sound of the nadhaswaram playing in the background, the Chief Guest, Padma Shri Vijay Amritraj lit the lamp along with the Mesquite Council member, Tandy Boroughs. Ram Nagappan (CIO, BNY Mellon Pershing), co-founder of ATEA was also on stage to light the lamp.

The EMERGE 2022 conference was being held in conjunction with the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of Tamil Nadu Foundation. With the goal of raising \$25k+ for each of the 38 districts in Tamil Nadu, TNF raised over 1.5x that amount! The interest from

this amount will fund underprivileged government schools for students with disabilities and educate the poorest of the poor students. Arun Kumar and Sriram Krishnan were the Chair and Co-Chair of the EMERGE 2022 conference with a focus on Eminence, Endurance and Excellence.

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj gave the opening keynote chatting with Hema Mohan. He mentioned that he is better known for his failures than his successes. People often ask him about losing (after being up 2 sets to love) to Jimmy Connors in the Wimbledon Quarterfinals and not about the fact that he played Davis Cup for 20 years – reaching the Finals twice in 1974 and 1987. During his career, Vijay Amritraj has beaten Bjorn Borg, Jimmy Connors, Rod Laver and John McEnroe. He quoted Billie Jean King and urged the audience (of mostly entrepreneurs) to consider “Every challenge as an opportunity” and to think of “Pressure as a privilege”. Hema Mohan got him to talk about his childhood and how he was constantly sick. In fact, it was to improve his health that he was encouraged to start playing tennis.

Bobby Balachandran, CEO of Exterro, spoke next on the topic of “Data is the New Oil”. This conversation was moderated by Rathi Mani. Exterro’s Legal Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) platform unifies e-discovery, privacy, and digital forensics activities. This help organizations effectively manage and mitigate regulatory, compliance, and litigation risks. Over 3500 customers (of which 80% are Fortune 500) currently use Exterro. Rathi Mani got Bobby to talk about his philanthropic initiatives – whether through support for charities or making the world a better place through offering their technology to data forensic students at colleges and universities and offering free training in their product to law enforcement officers worldwide.

Ar Rm Arun, President of South India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) was the next speaker. He participated over Zoom. Arun spoke of the \$1 Trillion Economy of Tamil Nadu and the role of the American Tamil Diaspora. TN is among the top 3 performing states in India for over 3 decades – contributing 9.16% GDP. The state targets to hit \$1 Trillion by 2030 from its current \$300 billion. So, a 3x growth in the next 8 years. The recent focus areas for the government are High-end electronics, EVs and Solar Power. He talked about how GoTN engages with the Tamil Diaspora on not just in Investments but also on Language, Culture, Tourism, and Social Initiatives. With over 1m units, TN accounts for the highest women entrepreneur-owned establishments in the Social Entrepreneurship initiatives in TN. Arun mentioned of the tremendous scope to work with ATEA’s Digital Accelerator to realize this vision.



Prashanth Chandrasekar, CEO of Stack Overflow was the last speaker before lunch. His session was moderated by Usha Vedavanam. He spoke on the topic of “What makes Developers Happy”. Given Stack Overflow has 100m monthly visitors that are mostly developers, he was well qualified to talk on this topic! The platform has over 50m questions and answers. Joel Spolsky and Jeff Atwood founded Stack Overflow in 2008 as a programming, question-and-answer website. When Stack Overflow started a SaaS business in 2019, they needed a CEO with different skillsets. With an MBA from HBS and his experience as VP and GM of Rackspace’s global business focused on the world’s leading Public Clouds, Prashanth was the ideal candidate for the job. In August 2021,

Prosus, a global consumer internet group and one of the largest technology investors in the world, acquired Stack Overflow. Usha Vedavanam asked Prashanth about developers and he said that developers crave flexibility and opportunities to learn something new. If they are not finding it in their current role, they are likely to look elsewhere.

The post-lunch session started with a PitchFest – moderated by Prakash Narayan from ATEA Silicon Valley. Five companies presented their startup ideas. There were four judges to evaluate these companies: Ram Nagappan (CIO, BNY Mellon Pershing); Adhavan Manickam (Venture Partner, Dallas Venture Capital); Arunmozhi Balasubramaniam (SVP, Radisys); Dayakar Pushkooor (MD, Dallas Venture Capital). The startups that presented were:

1. MentorMatch (Karthik Sundaram). They are revolutionizing the learning experience by creating safe and learner-centric environments, where students can ask and learn subjects with mentors on a 1-on-1 basis.
2. Mikro Grafeio Services (Ranchu Nair). They provide distributed workspaces as well as trained workforce in a single integrated solution
3. Integrin Enterprise Solutions (Sakthivel Vellingiri). They offer a cloud-based enterprise solution to Life Sciences organizations> They take care of all aspects of their operational efficiency, partner connection, quality & compliance
4. UVSET Inc (Manish Rangan). They have a patent pending, UV-C based sanitizing product that fits around pull door handles and kills over 99.9% of germs at pre-determined intervals.
5. RE (Ranga Krishnan). Their data and productivity solution (for commercial real estate professionals) offers a desktop/mobile application that digitizes privacy, provenance and permissions, to turn a 2-hour slog (of reviewing unreliable and incomplete data, chasing down leads to access accurate information via emails and phone calls to piece together reports they have confidence in) into a 10-minute breeze.

Per the evaluation of the judges, BEI.RE came first in the PitchFest. Mikro Grafeio came in second place.

There was a session on Growth Hacking by Arunmozhi Balasubramaniam (SVP, Radisys) in conversation with Sangeetha Ragavan. Chandra Dhandapani, who was recently promoted to CEO of the Global Workplace Solutions (GWS) business segment of CBRE Group spoke next in conversation with Sailakshmi Santhanam. GWS is an integrated, full-service real estate outsourcing business that serves the world's largest real estate occupiers in more than 100 countries. It was produced more than \$17b in revenue in 2021. Finally, there was a panel of Alternative Investment

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Strategies moderated by Venky Sadagopan. Panelists included Velu Raman, Real Estate Entrepreneur and Life Coach; Kumar Chandramoulie, Angel Investor and Startup Advisor; Thanga Thangavel, Realtor; Kalamani Ponnusamy, Crypto Funds Entrepreneur and Advisor.

Overall, the EMERGE 2022 conference was very well conducted with excellent content. The speakers brought a rich panoply of expertise and offered excellent input and advice to the audience. The networking opportunities that an in-person event offers are priceless. It is certainly redeeming that we are able to meet face to face after two years of virtual meetings during the global pandemic.



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