Indian Americans shine in Obama camp

SUJEET RAJAN

New York

U DAIF Tambor, a former pol- tician from Newark, and Cory Booker of Newark, NJ, has been named to presumptive Demo- cratic presidential nominee Barack Obama’s Urban Policy Committee.

Obama is planning on creating a White House Office on Urban Policy to ensure that all federal dollars tar- geted to urban areas are effectively spent on the highest-impact programs, reported the Baltimore Sun. The Director of Urban Policy will re- port directly to the President and co- ordinate all federal urban programs.

Tambor is the co-founder of the NYC chapter of South Asians for Obama (SAFO) and currently works in city government. He has previously served as Assistant Di- rector of Princeton University’s Pol- icy Research Institute and Policy Director for Cory Booker’s transition team. Tambor edited Movement of global talent: the economic labor flows from India and China.

Tambor’s appointment follows on the heels of another Indian American, Hari Sevugan, who was brought in as a spokesperson for Obama’s campaign. Sevugan had earlier served as Communications Director for Presidential candidate Chris Dodd.

Sevugan is a graduate from the University of Illinois, where he studied Political Science and Finance. After graduating, he joined Teach for America, an Americorps pro- gram that places qualified college graduates as teachers in underserved communities throughout the country. After two years as an award-winning school teacher in the Washington Heights community of New York, Sevugan enrolled in Northwestern School of Law, where he was an active member of the Bluhm Legal Clinic that offered pro bono legal service to juvenile and indigent clients.

After earning a J.D., Sevugan practiced securities law in Chicago for two years. Drawn to service, Se- vugan left his practice to become the Deputy Policy Director for Dan Hynes’ Senate campaign in Illinois. Later that cycle, Sevugan was the Deputy Campaign Manager for the insurgent Senate campaign of Dr. Daniel Menendez in Kentucky.

Under his leadership, the Menendez campaign came within 20,000 votes of a Republican incumbent, despite being outspent five-to- one. Last year, Sevugan joined Tim Kaine’s campaign for Governor in Virginia as Policy Director and was heavily involved in crafting the mes- sage that vaulted Kaine to a six point victory last November. Sevugan was asked to stay on with the transition team as Senior Policy Ad- visor to Governor-Elect Kaine.

Challenge is to develop highest quality drugs at the lowest cost: Kapil Sibal

At USA-India Chamber of Commerce’s BioPharma Summit the minister spoke about collaborative initiatives between the two countries

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Boston, MA

MARKING another milestone in the India and US business ties, the USA-India Cham- ber of Commerce-Boston organized its an- nual Biopharma and Life Sciences Summit.

With India’s Minister of Science & Tech- nology Kapil Sibal as the keynote speaker, the Summit was attended by over 350 senior bio, pharma, medical devices and healthcare profes- sionals.

Stressing on the fast emerging intellectual property regime in India, Sibal promised that the country will not only uphold the interests of indulging pharmaceutical companies but will also actively work on a multi-bina- risis to develop collaborative initiatives for mu- tual benefits in the field of agriculture, marine and health sciences.

Stating that the challenge was to develop the highest quality drugs at the lowest cost, Sibal emphasized on novel discovery efforts to meet the need of locals that would pave the road for international success.

Citing Tata’s Rs 1 lakh car, Nano, as the prototypical example for his three-point mantra—accessibility, affordability and world-class quality—Sibal described the ide- ology of scientific achievement across differ- ent nations as a symbiotic ecosystem, not lim- ited by geographic boundaries.

In his opening remark, Karun Rishi, presi- dent of the USA-India Chamber of Com- merce said: “Innovation and funding innova- tion will get a big boost from this Summit. Collaborative research and strategic alliances will be the key forces driving the business.”

He encouraged the US companies to ex- pedite and expand their partnerships in In- dia. Urging Indian government to improve the infrastructure, Rishi said: “Infrastructure is a common issue limiting the growth of any industry. Sooner India creates world- class roads, airports, buildings, 24-hour wa- ter supply and electricity, the faster will be the economic impact not only on the indus- try but for the common man.” He also urged the Indian academic institutions to partner with the US bio-pharma industry to learn, share, expand capacity and commer- cialize innovation.

Meanwhile, Drug Controller General of India, Dr Surinder Singh, in his speech, spoke about implementation of an advanced “e-gov- ernance drug regulatory system in India.”

This unique electronic system is currently being developed with intense support from the Indian IT sector to suit the Indian context. This digitalized and interactive portal is being seen as a revolutionary change to centralize the regulatory system and running clinical tri- als in India, ensuring transparency and ac- countability at all levels.

On being questioned about the compe- tence of panel deciding the fate of a drug, Singh assured an impartial and independent panels integrating diverse expertise will be in- corporated including academia, medicine, in- dustry and government.

McKinsey & Company, the knowledge partner for the Summit, presented a Position Paper, which was officially released by Sibal. Titled Thought Starters to Spur US-India Bio- Pharma Collaboration, the report suggested 10 ideas to take the US-India Life Sciences and Healthcare business to the next level.

During a lively discussion on ‘Funding in- novation and Cross Border M&A Trends,’ Frederick Frank, vice-chairman of Lehman Brothers, commented: “Most pharma compa- nies need to introduce more than three new products a year to maintain growth. Given that every single product in the current pipeline and associated costs, there is no chance of this happening.”

The dignitaries at the Summit included: Dr William Chin, vice-president of Discov- ery Research at Elion Labs; Jim Mullen, CEO of Biogen Idec; G.V. Prasad, CEO of Dr Reddy’s Labs; Venkat Jasti, CEO of Sugen; Josh Boger, CEO, Vertex Pharma and chair- man of BIO. Dr Mark Powell, senior vice- president and worldwide head Pharma De- velopment, Bristol Myers Squibb; Jim Mullen, CEO Biogen Idec; Jeff Eil, chief operating officer- Novartis Institutes of Bio- medical Research; Rod MacKenzie, senior vice-president, Worldwide Research- Pfizer; and Barbara Yanni, chief licensing officer, Merck & Co.

The conclusions drawn were: investors like Frederick Frank of Lehman Brothers, Helmut Schuhler of TVM Capital, Alexander, OrbMed, Fiduciary, Mor- gan Stanley, Oxford Bio, Perkins, Pappas Ventures, Venrock and Healthcare Ventures participated.