Dean Angelides, Director, International Operations, ESRI Inc, addressing the conference

Geospatial community across public/private sector and academia gathered at The ESRI user conference to share knowledge and collaborate for developing smart technology solutions that can make life better

A knowledge sharing experience

The 13th ESRI user conference offered a perfect platform for sharing knowledge, thoughts, success stories and collaborating with the user community. S Sridhar, President and COO, NIIT GIS Ltd, set the ball rolling as he reviewed milestones achieved by ESRI during its 16 years of service. The company has been successful in developing a strong customer base of 3,000 users across domains, of which 160 new customers were added in the past one year alone. During this period the company reached out to the user community through regional seminars organised across 16 cities and also participated in various geospatial events, which provided a potential opportunity to gain insights into the evolving requirements and identifying unmet needs of the user community. Focusing on the company's vision to offer solutions to enhance the quality of life, Sridhar highlighted some of the successful projects that use ESRI software solutions, such as 'e-pathai' – an electronic management system for better maintenance of roads in Tamil Nadu; Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) city which has been designed using the renowned geodeisgn technology from ESRI. Other major users of ESRI technology include Indian Oil Corporation, National Population Registry, National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), AT&T Integrated Global Enterprise Management System (iGEMS), Singapore Land Authority,

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Philippine geoportal, country of Guam. As he concluded, Sridhar thanked the user community for their tremendous contributions and urged them for collaborating and cross coordination to make the best use of technology in offering smart solutions.

Briefing on the GIS activities of Survey of India, S Subbarao, Surveyor General of India, highlighted the role of India's principal mapping agency in the development of the National GIS. Empahsising on the critical role of surveyors in planning and development, he said, "A surveyor is the first person to visit any place where development is planned." Knowingly or unknowingly geospatial technology has entered our homes and the technological innovations have also made

the work of surveyors easy. Discussing on the role of National GIS, Subbarao said it aims at opening India for its citizens, and it is the responsibility of SoI to develop and maintain the National GIS. Even though spatial data is only one per cent in National GIS, it plays a critical role in the integration of information. The National GIS version 1.0 will have maps on the 1:50K scale which will be later on replaced with 1:10k data, as there is scope of providing better information on this data scale. Subbarao discussed the level of details to be provided by National GIS and the benefits it will provide. Many technical procedures still need to be established for National GIS in which a major time consuming process is the collection of data from various government departments. Open series maps will be used in National GIS for which software and hardware will need to be upgraded. As crowdsourced data will also be used, mechanism for quality check of such data needs to be set in place. National GIS will play a crucial role in enabling G-governance, assimilating data from public agencies, providing citizen services and management of natural resources.

Making his point on how GIS is becoming societal infrastructure for information,

Rajesh Mathur, Vice Chairman, NIIT-GIS Ltd, presenting mementos to participants

Dean Angelides, Director, International Operations, ESRI Inc, talked about how the technology is delivering value in terms of demographics, environment, public safety, business management, disaster response, land use planning, transport, renewable energy development. GIS has become more compelling because maps communicate, the technology integrates and helps in creating collaborations. He added, "Maps help us in integrating, applying knowledge and telling stories." Spatial analysis creates understanding which helps in planning for a better future. Dean talked about how important it is to get things on a map especially during disasters and for monitoring climate change, as maps communicate, disseminate knowledge, integrate information from diverse sources and work groups, support decision making, show status and performance, help in analysing time based information. Hinting at the advancement in GIS technology, Dean said, "GIS is at a major turning point. It is evolving dramatically, leveraging and converging with many trends. It is helping science evolve, so they are co-evolving."

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Talking about the Indian scenario Dean discussed how data policies in India are chaging to promote data sharing. New and easy tools are being developed and more data is being presented in 3D, opening up our world. Cloud platforms are integrating and extending GIS for connecting everything and making information available anywhere and anytime. This is breaking down barriers enabling organisations to rapidly adapt to this platform and liberate their geospatial data. A series of success stories from across sectors such as healthcare, forestry and environment, infrastructure, disaster management were presented during the two-day event which concluded with presentation of the user awards.

Scott Morehouse, Director of Software Development, ESRI Inc, interacting with the gathering