

## Move for more Java technology professionals

By Chandra Devi

JAVA and its related technologies are being widely used and to a certain extent, it's becoming the *de facto* standard.

To fill the ever-growing demand for Java technology professionals worldwide, Sun Microsystems, developer of the Solaris operating system (OS) and the brewer of Java, has various educational programmes outlined for the academic and corporate market.

"Our mandate is to transfer Sun's technology and, in accordance with this, we have developed a series of training and certification programmes to train and certify information technology (IT) professionals in the emerging Java standard," said Anton Ravindran, Sun's regional business manager for educational services.

"Java is being widely used by the manufacturing sectors and this has created a huge demand for people with knowledge in Java and its related technologies. It's a real-world skill and those who have it will find ample employment opportunities."

Research firm International Data Corp (IDC) ex-

pects 750,000 Java programmers will be needed by next year. "Currently we are not even close to that. The only way we can get Java technology out is by educating the people, and the right place to start is institutions of higher learning," said Anton.

For the company, its efforts in the academic arena come with two aims. First is to cater to the huge demand for Java-skilled workers and the second is to nurture its technologies. "Going into the higher education arena is vital as this is the main source for future skilled manpower and also for strengthening ties as these graduates will eventually join the corporate world," said Anton.

At the local front, the company seems to be gaining a foothold in the academic arena from its recent collaborations with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Informatics, Binary Business School, APIIT and HELP, just to name a few, to develop the much-needed skills in Java technologies.

"The depth and breath of this technology is rather broad and, as such, there is a need for large

pool of skill sets with different specialisations. This, in turn, warrants more certifications and skilled people to drive the technology," said Anton. "In line with this, we are very active in education services compared to the other vendors, in terms of going to the masses and have much more penetration."

**Programme delivery:** At the academic front, the company has the *Value Added Instructional Programme (VIP)* which offers 30 to 40 segmented Java courses. Those under this programme include Authorised Java Centres (AJCs) and Java Learning Centres (JLCs), such as the one launched at UPM recently.

On the corporate front, Java training and courses are provided via its Premier Educational Partners.

"At each level, the course offerings are different. For example, for the corporate level, Sun Java certification is available at three levels - programmer, developer and architect. However, at private institutions, only programmer level courses are offered," said Anton.

"With Java certifications, you can become a

programmer, a developer, a Web administrator, an e-commerce specialist and can take different routes as opposed to other certifications," he said, adding that the company is in the process of adding more certifications as Java is a comprehensive technology with widespread use.

"We focus on delivering courses in Java technology and Solaris operating system via our network of Solaris and Java Authorised Training Centres," said Anton.

The company will soon make available training programmes covering the new Jini technology. Under the AOL-Netscape-Sun alliance, the company has a charter to manage and transfer the technology which will also be part of its curriculum offering. With the acquisition of NetDynamix, Sun is also in the process of developing the curriculum for the technology.

**More than paper qualifications:** Anton said the company offers more than just paper qualifications as industrial training is also provided to selected students. "A major part of our educational programmes is industrial

training. We don't just train and leave students in a lurch but give them an opportunity to gain real-world experience."

Citing an example, he said it has an arrangement with Singapore's National Computer Board (NCB) to provide internship for students. In Malaysia, such an exercise is about to begin soon.

On the issue of continuing education, Anton said the company has no control and it is up to the individual to keep posted to maintain their marketability. "Some form of continuing education requirements is necessary to ensure that certifications do not become outdated and it is up to individuals to keep up to date with the latest products released by the company," he said.

**Joint certification:** In another effort to increase the pool of Java technology professionals worldwide, the company entered into a collaboration with IBM, Novell, Oracle and Sun-Netscape Alliance recently to establish standards for knowledge and skill levels for developers using Java technology.

"This multi-vendor Java technology training and



Anton: Opportunity for real-world experience.

certification initiative is to promote common standards for the skills validation of Java technology developers at three levels," Anton said, adding that the collaboration will give birth to a ready supply of individuals for enterprise applications. The first level is expected to be Sun Certified Programmer for the Java examination. The second and third levels will be provided by other participating vendors.

"This joint certifications, simply put, enables transfer of credits to one of the programmes offered by any one of the other vendors," said Anton, adding that the reason for the joint certification was because of Java's popularity.