

India can benefit from Goa's ties with the Portuguese World

The recently concluded two-day international congress titled 'India and the Lusophone Market' gave Indian corporates the opportunity to interact with industry leaders from Lusophone countries. President of Lusophone Society of Goa, Aurobindo Xavier tells NT BUZZ that Goa could be the hub for small and medium scale industries doing profitable business with Lusophone countries

How would you describe the notion 'Lusophonic'?

Today, there are over two hundred and fifty million Portuguese speakers in the world making the language the fifth most spoken language. Besides, it is also the official language in countries like Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and the Chinese Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Macau. It extends to people who are culturally and linguistically linked to Portugal, either historically or by choice. A Lusophone country may not have any Portuguese ancestry at all. The Lusophone world is mainly a legacy of the Portuguese empire, although Portuguese Diaspora communities have also played a role in spreading the Portuguese language and Portuguese culture.

Why is it so important to have economic ties with other Lusophone countries?

There is tremendous potential to tap in the market what with over two hundred and fifty million Portuguese speaking people. If India enters the market there will be so many business avenues that could be explored. Even today, there are several large scale Indian companies who are doing so well.

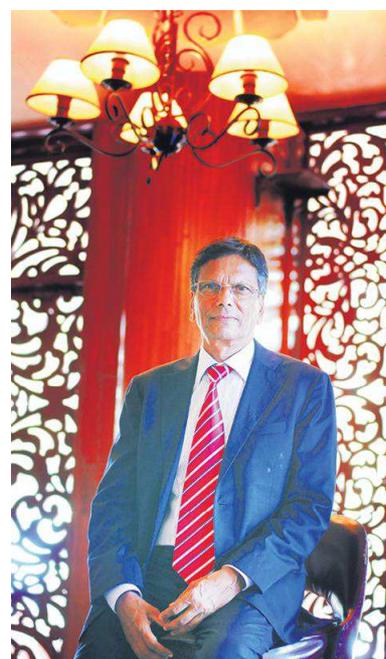
How can India benefit from the ties Goa has with other Lusophone countries?

India is undertaking notable advances in many fields such as Information Technology, Pharmaceuticals, Medical Tourism, industrial and transport products, electronic equipment, etc. On the other hand India imports miscellaneous goods and services such as agricultural products, minerals, fuel, construction materials, etc. The trade between Lusophone countries and India was 20 billion USD in 2012 as compared to the 90 billion between Lusophone countries and China despite China commencing trade in the late 90s.

A lot of people in Goa speak Portuguese, which makes it the common factor. This common factor can facilitate business and economic relationships. The mentality of Goans is similar to that of Portuguese speaking people. So, there is plenty of opportunity that can be tapped if the Indian government and state government are positive and serious about exploring the market and establishing good economic relations. Goa can be the hub of the country for small and medium scaled industries as the investment will not be huge. Opportunities can also be facilitated from Lusophone countries, but ultimately it is the government who has to give the 'go ahead'.

Are there Lusophone countries which are relevant to India, besides Portugal?

Mozambique plays an important geo-strategic role for the neighbouring landlocked countries, including India. It is important for the geo strategy policy and navigation policy. Brazil also holds importance to India, being a part of BRIC- (Brazil, Russia, India and China, which are at a similar stage of economic development). India should focus on improving the south – south economic relationship with Brazil.



What was the aim behind forming the Goa Lusophone Society?

The society is just three years old. The aim of the Society is to promote and support the Lusophone culture in Goa, fostering connections between Goa and the Lusophone countries, and pursuing projects related to the Portuguese language and Lusophone cultures in fields of arts, charity, education, science and technology. Knowledge of the Lusophone culture is essential for understanding the political, economic, and social world with which India and particularly the State of Goa has increasing ties. Our society is interested in contributing towards the development of the state and providing a platform for global exchange.

Do you think the Goa government will look at this avenue for fostering economic relations with the Lusophone countries?

Absolutely. I think the Government is doing very well in trying to attract foreign investments in Goa. I'm sure they will help in providing links to Lusophone countries. It also depends on the investment policy of the government of Goa. I am sure the policy will help contribute to intensify economic ties between Lusophone countries through Goa. But, the plan has to be sustainable having social cohesion and being environment friendly.

Tell us about the Goa Lusophone Society's activities?

The society in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry, IDEA – Institute of Asian Studies and AAPI – Friendship Association Portugal-India organized the international congress “India and the Lusophone Market”. The congress was an important means of acquiring knowledge of countries, their economy, their potentials and constraints, enabling the participants to get in touch with entrepreneurs in order to raise the level of collaboration through partnerships between Indian companies and of the various Portuguese-speaking countries.