

GUEST SPEECH
by
Ambassador of the European Union
Mr. Tomasz Kozlowski
at the New Delhi World Book Fair, 7 January 2017

Honourable Minister of State for Human Resources Dr. Mahendra Nath Pandey; distinguished author Dr. Pratibha Ray; Joint Secretary Higher Education Ms. Aparna Sharma; Chairman, National Book Trust, Mr. Baldeo Bhai Sharma; Executive Director of the ITPO, Ms. Shubhra Singh; Director of the National Book Trust, Dr. Rita Chowdhury and my fellow book lovers

I am honoured to attend the inauguration of the New Delhi World Book Fair, an event with long and successful history. The New Delhi Book Fair is one of the major events in the publishing world together with Frankfurt, London, Warsaw, Sharjah, Paris Book Fairs.

The book fairs play the twin role of being a cultural as well as business event. They are important initiatives which help spread reading habits and contribute to creating a book culture. Reading not only enriches knowledge but also helps widen views, encourage imagination and helps to know each other from all around the world better. Book fairs are events which also offer business opportunities. However, for me the most important aspect of the book fairs is the participation of general public. The New Delhi Book Fair as an exhibition attracts a lot of attention in India: I am convinced that this year again hundreds of thousands of readers will visit the Fair.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a growing perception that with the Internet and other new technologies, the role of traditional books in our cultural and social will be diminishing. Some people might even think that books and new technologies are at a contrast. I think that this contrast is specious. Books are probably the most important new technologies which have ever been invented; think of the impact they have had to disseminate new ideas and generate new knowledge. However, we need to adapt to the challenges of the new technological revolution.

The publishing industry in India is flourishing. Book fairs are organized not only in New Delhi, but also in other big Indian cities. India is one of the top six publishing countries in the world today.

We observe the same phenomena in Europe. The annual sales revenue of book publishers of the European Union in 2015 was approximately € 22.3 billion. More than 575,000 new titles were issued by European publishers in 2015. Including imports from outside of Europe, the value of the European book market is estimated at €36-38 billion. The e-book market accounts for 5-6% of the total.

The European Union actively promotes translation of literary works inside Europe (Europe as India is linguistically very diversified) and from other parts of the world. The Indian literature is present and appreciated in Europe, not in English speaking countries only. As an interesting example, the first translations of Indian classical literature were published in Polish, my native language, already in 20s and 30s in the 20th century. And now, Polish translations of Hindi, Tamil, Urdu and Malayan poetry etc. are also available in Polish.

An interest in expanding links between European and Indian literature and our publishers is confirmed by a fact that a number of European countries participate in this year Fair. A few years ago Poland was the Guest country.

I am also happy that In Hall 7 of the Book Fair you can see photographs of the Indian diaspora in the European Union. The complete exhibition has been shown in Delhi and Mumbai. Our purpose of showing these photographs here is to provide Indian visitors a glimpse into Europe as one of the most open and multicultural societies in the world, now home for over 2 million Indians.

While once again congratulating the National Book Trust of India and the India Trade Promotion Organisation for organizing this event, I would like to declare that the European Union would be ready to act as the Guest of the next New Delhi Book Fair in 2018, with the participation of publishers from many EU Member States.

I wish the Fair a big success!

Thank you for your attention.