



Professor Arnoud De Meyer, Director of Judge Business School, talks to Boni Sones about the launch of the Centre for India & Global Business

TRANSCRIPT

How significant is it that the Centre for India & Global Business at Judge Business School is being developed now in 2009?

Judge Business School (University of Cambridge) is an international business school. People from all over the world come here to study. India is a very important centre for emerging business. So it is very relevant to all the people who come here to study at Judge that we do more research on how Indian companies internationalise. So the Centre will focus on Indian business.

Is it significant that you are reaching out with a website and podcasts, using IT to reach business in India?

The new generation in India is used to IT. We hope Indians will come and study in Cambridge and this new generation are used to peer-to-peer social networking sites. India is a big player in the world of IT and some great ideas on how to utilise IT have come out of India.

Do you think the Centre will have a pivotal role in connecting to India?

It is very important for India to connect to the rest of the world. Even though India is big, it must reach out to the rest of the world. The Centre will play a pivotal role in forming a network for Indian business, by increasing and enhancing the understanding between European business and Indian business.

What do you see as the short-term benefits of the Centre?

Firstly we hope to build up quite quickly a deep understanding of how Indian businesses internationalise and innovate. We can share this information with the students at Judge. For example a student from China or South America will get a better appreciation of how India works.

Secondly Cambridge is a booming, dynamic hi-tech cluster just like Mumbai and Bangalore. We can link entrepreneurs here to entrepreneurs there.

What about Research & Development?

India has skills and knowledge workers. Many companies have moved R&D to India from Europe to take advantage of well-trained, well-educated Indians. The question of how you organise international networks of R&D to interact around knowledge is very tricky.



Knowledge is often tacit, non-codified. How do we create better links between Westerns labs and Indian labs? How can we get the knowledge to flow?

What about the timing of the opening of the Centre in the middle of a global recession?

The best way to get out of a difficult economy is by innovation, not necessarily coming from here, USA or Japan, but innovation rooted in the needs of the emerging middle class such as in India. If you put the middle classes of South East Asia, India and China together you have around 500 million people, which is bigger than the EU. They have their own needs, their own interests. If we look to them for a source of ideas for innovation it will like Bollywood is a source of renewal for the film industry. We need to set up better ways of listening to the emerging middle class. The world can benefit from innovation in India.

What are some of the negative factors that impact Indian business at the moment?

There are three big obstacles:

- (1) Infrastructure and energy, for examples, the harbours and roads are poor which prevent India's access to the rest of the world.
- (2) Cheap labour has meant that the quality of manufacturing is not world class.
- (3) Skills development. India has schools for the elite but no continuing education programmes for them. People below this elite have insufficient opportunities for education and training. So we need training for the masses.

Do you see the Centre for India & Global Business as a channel for knowledge transfer?

Yes, it will be a powerful form of partnership with knowledge transfer in both directions, not just one-way, from the West to India, but, just as the internationalisation of Chinese companies influenced the west, knowledge transfer will be from India to Europe. Creative solutions from India will enrich the rest of the world.

What do you hope the Centre will have achieved a year from now?

A year is a very short time. I hope that a year from now the Centre will have some research output and will have contributed to Indian internationalisation to benefit Indian business. I think the Centre will get people together to talk about how India can help the world to get out of recession.

Professor Arnoud de Meyer, thank you very much.