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IT CHARTS A REVERSE TREND

B S Anilkumar | TNN

One are the days when only big companies in leading cities with substantially credible track record were able to think about setting shops overseas. Now, many European nations and Australia are scouting Kerala to woo potentially brilliant young entrepreneurs competent enough to meet their technology requirements and willing to set up information technology companies in those countries.

Two young entrepreneurs from Technopark-Technology Business Incubator (T-TBI) have set up companies in Bavaria in Germany and three more young entrepreneurs recently completed the formalities to start business. Meanwhile, five more companies - run by young entrepreneurs - are holding final talks for setting up shops in Australia and a couple of companies, incubated at T-TBI, here have already finalized the formalities for setting up units in Helsinki, Finland - the homeland of mobile phone major Nokia.

The trend started after Technopark-Technology Business Incubator, the first of its kind incubator in the state, started providing opportunities to potential incubated companies to participate in international IT events a couple of years ago.

"The direct interaction between young entrepreneurs and those who scout for talents begets speedy results. The chances for red-tapism hindering such interactions are very less, said secretary-cum-registrar of T-TBI K C Chandrasekharan Nair.

"The trend is very much visible now. Investment ambassadors of many European countries frequent technology incubation centres of Kerala and strike deals with young entrepreneurs for establishing business entities in European cities and elsewhere," said Anoop P Ambika, secretary of Group of Technology Companies (G-Tech), Kerala.

He said that most recession-hit European companies are looking for investors as a means to spruce up local employment and also to create an ecosystem where new potential investors can work and grow. "This is a great opportunity, but it is also important for young entrepreneurs to choose the right partners as getting free workspace and benefits like that during the initial days alone would not help to run a company successfully," he added.

Of late, the initiative of facilitating international exposure and opportunity to engage in direct talks with investment authorities overseas has been taken over by the state government. When young entrepreneurs visit foreign countries as members of an official delegation, the trust they command from international participants increases manifold.

"We have made it a policy to include young entrepreneurs in the state delegation that visit IT events across the world. No major company would be able to offer the kind of cost-effective solutions that these start-ups can offer European clients. Many European countries such as Germany and Finland are keen to promote young entrepreneurs and so they offer a lot of incentives. For them, it's not just a way to create a platform for cost-effective and cutting edge solutions, but also the creation of a conducive ecosystem that would attract more native talents to the field," Nair said, adding that first generation companies, incubated from T-TBI, were helping a lot to open up international investment options for the new companies of the incubator.

Europe and Australia Are Rolling Out The Red Carpet And Offering Incentives For Young IT Entrepreneurs From Kerala To Set Up Companies Abroad

Brussels offers prime space in the heart of Europe

B Sreejan | TNN

Many people think of Brussels as the political capital of Europe and the seat of many European institutions. But it is also one of the world's leading business centres, located at the heart of an open economic market of more than 500 million people," - thus reads a brochure widely circulated by the Brussels Trade and Investment office at Chennai among the technology and other service oriented companies in Kerala.

The capital of Belgium and the European Union is one of the new entrants in the group of foreign countries wooing investors in Kerala. "Brussels is a small city and we are not looking for manufacturing industries. ICT companies and others working in the health sector are our target," said Kathlijn Fruithof, trade and investment attaché of Brussels in Chennai. "Belgium has an extremely well educated, productive and multilingual workforce. Unlike most European capitals, it is large enough to be cosmopolitan and small enough to allow its inhabitants to enjoy all the advantages of a city on a human scale," she said.

It was in January, this year, that Belgium started the office of Brussels Invest and Export in Chennai. Last month, Fruithof was in Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram to meet companies in Infopark and Technopark. "It was a routine visit. We have introduced the available options to them", she said. For getting hands on experience, Brussels has mooted Brussels Business Welcome package, which provides three months free use of office at the historical tour and taxis building or at Avenue Louis.

Bavaria beckons with all-round support

B S Anilkumar | TNN

Setting up an IT company in Bavaria, one of the richest provinces in Germany, was never as simple as it is now. "If young entrepreneurs in Kerala have the potential to cater to Bavaria, they are welcome. The government would provide them workspace free of cost for three months. Plus, they would get the support required to reach out to the market," said John Kottayil, who is the executive director of Bavarian State office, India.

Over the last couple of years, Kottayil - who heads the invest in Bavaria campaign - has been interacting with potential Technopark-Technology Business Incubation (T-TBI) companies working in verticals of interest to Bavaria. "It's not just the automotive

industry that requires young talent. Around 95% of the industry is in the SME sector. They need cutting-edge technologies and cost-effective solutions to leverage their business prospects. This is wherein young talents from Kerala can find their fortunes," he said.

Bavaria is also promoting students from India. Unlike other European countries, pupils are free to work while they study. Cost of education is also cheap compared to Europe or the US. Kottayil said Bavaria needs professionals in subjects such as maths, informatics, natural sciences and engineering. "By inviting young talents to set up their own business, we hope to create an ecosystem that would attract more native talents," he said, adding that two T-TBI companies have already set up offices in Bavaria.

"The package includes a fully equipped office for three people, internet, telephone and fax facilities and access to meeting rooms," she said.

At present, a group from south India, comprising senior representatives of around 10 companies are touring the country to explore business possibilities. "Representatives of a couple of firms from Kerala will soon visit Brussels. We don't want to divulge more details at this point," said Alex T Koshiy, partner - transaction and consulting, Brussels Invest and Export.

A major advantage which Brussels is trying to sell is its connectivity with other important European cities. "It is important that you are near your core market area. In less than two hours, you can reach London, Paris and Cologne by train. It will take only 80 minutes to reach Paris," said Fruithof.

SOFTWARE EXPORT FROM KERALA (2012-13)

Technopark companies
₹3,500CR

Infopark companies
₹1,500CR

Others **₹300CR**

Total worth of software exports
₹5,300CR

MAJOR EXPORTERS

INFOSYS
₹898CR

ALLIANCE CORNHILL
₹200CR

IBS SOFTWARE SERVICES
₹174CR

EMYE
₹116CR

NEST SOFTWARE SERVICES
₹108CR

UST GLOBAL
₹107CR

“ If young entrepreneurs in Kerala have the potential to cater to Bavaria, they are welcome. The government would provide them workspace free of cost for three months. Plus, they would get the support required to reach out to the market **”**

John Kottayil | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BAVARIAN STATE OFFICE, INDIA

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K C Chandrasekharan Nair | SECRETARY-CUM-REGISTRAR OF T-TBI

Burn flab as you learn

Preetu Venugopalan Nair | TNN

Kochi: Schools are not just temples of learning these days; many are now turning into places where students get to burn flab. After introducing free medical check-ups and health insurance, the schools are now setting up gyms that offer cardio and weight training exercises and aerobics to the students.

"We have observed that students' concentration levels improve after they begin an exercise regime under a proper trainer. The facility at our school is popular among senior students," said Choice School, Kochi, principal Sunitha Sathesh.

The exercise regime is fixed according to the child's age and a dietician prepares the student's food chart. Most schools offer their gym facilities to the parents too so that it encourages the children to exercise.

"We want our students to stay healthy and fit and are in the process of setting up a fully quipped gym," said MES International School, Pattambi, principal Asha Byju.

Kerala CBSE School Management Association president T P M Ibrahim Khan said that an increasing number of schools are now introducing gym as an indoor sports activity for students. "Schools need to constantly introduce new sports activities to keep children interested in doing exercises," said Khan.

The trend comes at a time when obesity amongst adolescent children is on the rise. "We have seen an increase in lifestyle diseases among children. The schools therefore need to encourage physical activities among students," said Indian Academy of Paediatrics Kerala chapter president Dr Sachidananda Kamath.

"We ensure a lot of physical activities for our children and hence there is no problem of obesity amongst them. Besides regular sports and yoga, we have also extended gym facilities to our children," said St Paul's International School, Kochi, principal Susan Mohan.

Some schools have also roped in dieticians to get children eat healthier at school. "The habit of eating healthy food needs to be inculcated from a young age. Our dietician prepares a food chart for each of the children. We advise the parents to strictly follow it," said Divya N P, a teacher with Delhi International School, Valanchery.

E-tendering for LSG works too

Sreedevi Chitharanjan | TNN

Kozhikode: E-tendering has been made mandatory for works worth Rs 25 lakh and above in all local self government (LSG) bodies in the state, according to an order issued by the LSG department on June 25.

The tenders will be floated through the website www.etenders.kerala.gov.in. The facility is being implemented with the help of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and Kerala State Information Technology Mission.

NIC programmer J Anzar Riyaz said that the system will allow the participants to download the tender schedule free of cost and submit the bid online.

"Only registered contractors will be able to submit the bids. The details of the contractors participating in process would be kept confidential and will be revealed only at the times of opening the bid," he said.

"The system will ensure transparency and quality of works and curb corruption in the tendering process," said principal secretary James Varghese.

E-tendering has already been introduced for works related to government departments like irrigation, police, harbour engineering, education, water authority and PWD.

LSG body officials who will be involved in the e-tendering process are being given the required training by the NIC.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



VSSC director S Ramakrishnan and R&D director John P Zachariah arrive at the Thiruvananthapuram airport on Tuesday. The scientists were part of the ISRO team that launched the PSLV-C22 from Sriharikota on Monday night. The mission successfully placed India's first navigation satellite in orbit

'Education a key pillar of Indo-US partnership'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kozhikode: Indian ambassador to the United States, Nirupama Rao has said that education has emerged as a key pillar of the ongoing strategic global partnership between India and the US.

Speaking on 'Indo-US Knowledge Initiative' as part of the Frontier Lecture series of the Calicut University, she said that there has been considerable progress in expanding the bilateral initiative, especially in areas like community colleges, on-line education and research and innovation.

"There are around 220 million children in the country's schools today who will be entering the universities in a few years. A significant number of them will need to be equipped vocationally and technically to be able to contribute to the Indian economy. The community colleges which are well established all over the US can provide us with lessons that can be very relevant to Indian needs," she said adding that the AICTE and the US national level community college organization had signed an MoU last week to promote collaboration in the field.

Rao said that IIT Bombay has signed a memorandum with Edex, an institution based in Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to promote online education.

"This is the era of Indo-US partnership. Gone



Indian envoy to US Nirupama Rao is surrounded by autograph-seekers in Kozhikode on Tuesday

are the days when we were referred to as estranged democracies. Today we are two democracies engaged in a strategic global partnership of which education has become a main pillar," she added.

Earlier, she attended the release function of 'Mazha Kanakkunnu', the Malayalam translation of her poetry book Rain Rising, at the university seminar complex. The poems, translated into Malayalam by Prof M N Karasserry, is published by the Calicut University Publication division.

The book was released by Kerala State Higher Education Council vice chairman T P Sreenivasan by handing it over to writer P Valsala.

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