



But big publishers have recognized the potential of India with Penguin, Harper Collins and Random House setting up operations there to publish Indian books in English and distribute them in India.

Yet, in a country of extreme contrasts, it is estimated that one third of Indians under 15 years are illiterate. The export of books produced in India is estimated to be worth \$100 million annually. India's reasonably priced educational text books in particular are in great demand in developing countries.

In the West, books from India continue to enjoy popularity, in particular those reflecting the country's rich and varied culture, such as volumes on spirituality or cuisine. "Books about Hinduism, Buddhism and all their variations obviously still enjoy unbroken popularity among publishing companies and readers," says Michael Kegler, curator of the Guest of Honor exhibitions at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

According to Kegler, they range from "the first seafarers' accounts to the almost obligatory India trips during the 1960s and on to modern reports on trekking tours and culture tourism." India is Guest of Honor at this year's Frankfurt Book Fair, the second time the country has received the honor.

Some 200 Indian publishers are attending the fair, the largest of its kind in the world. Forty writers have been invited by India's National Book Trust (NBT), the organizer of India's Guest of Honor project, and at least an equal number have been invited by their own publishers. Among them will be well-known authors like Amitav Ghosh and Amit Chaudhuri.

"Not only will the numerous artists, authors and publishers coming to the Frankfurt Book Fair document the fast alteration of India in the last 20 years, but there will also be representatives of the booming Indian IT and printing industry," says Juergen Boos, director of the book fair.

The book fair will provide a global platform for India's publishing industry and writers, and provide an opportunity to promote the translation of books in India's 24 official and 120 regional languages, something which has been somewhat lacking in the past.

"Many publishing companies, not just in Germany, but in neighboring countries as well, have picked up on India's Guest of Honor appearance in Frankfurt as an occasion to add Indian authors to their lists," says Kegler. "Today's India" occupies a 4,000 square-meter exhibition at the book fair and is strong evidence of the vast potential of India, both as a source and destination of books.

To quote NBT director Nuzhat Hassan, "India will be the flavor of the season."

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### **Middle East Publishers' Association (MEPA).**

Dubai Media City, Office No. 6, Media Business Center, 2nd floor, Building No. 2,  
P O Box: 502038, Dubai, UAE. Email: [mepa@mepa.cc](mailto:mepa@mepa.cc), website: [www.mepa.cc](http://www.mepa.cc)