

Global Trader guide to
Investment & Export 2014

SPECIAL REPORT | ASIA TRADE



The hard work behind
building trade with India and
Asia for Hampshire firms

Hover-graft



Jojar Singh, Chairman of Hampshire Chamber Asian Network and a solicitor at Whiteley-based law firm Lawcomm, on the little county punching above its weight

A major drive to help UK companies strengthen trade links with India is the latest initiative of a Hampshire-based business network celebrating its fifth birthday this year.

The Hampshire Chamber Asian Network (HAN) works closely with exporters, importers and other stakeholders to facilitate vital alliances and connections, so putting businesses in the frame for contracts.

Its latest event, Recipe for Success in India, was a conference held at the home of Hampshire cricket, the Ageas Bowl, as England and India squared up for the third Test in summer 2014.

The rivalry on the pitch provided a talking point ahead of presentations from a range of speakers and the announcement that a Hampshire hovercraft manufacturer, Griffon Hoverwork, had landed a £12m Indian contract.

Among those involved in the conference were the India Business Group of the UK law

firm Dutton Gregory, the financial services company BDO, who have built up a large Indian clientele, and the inward investment agency, Invest in Hampshire.

One of the speakers was Mark Baulch, an international trade expert helping companies across the south develop export trade in India and other high-growth economies.

Mr Baulch works from Hampshire Chamber's Fareham headquarters to connect firms with accredited overseas business centres and support services.

His work is part of the Overseas Business Network Initiative led by British Chambers of Commerce, UKTI and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Launched in 2009 as an integral part of Hampshire Chamber, HAN interprets 'Asian' in its broadest cultural sense and welcomes businesses from all sectors, sizes and communities to become an active part of the network. As well as providing opportunities and support for Asian businesses in

Hampshire, the aim is to highlight to British companies how they can become more involved with the Asian business community here and overseas. Part of the driver behind HAN's Indian focus is the recognition that lucrative opportunities exist and that a 'Made in Britain' label is appealing to many buyers.

Griffon Hoverwork is a prime example. The contract win announced at the Ageas Bowl was for 12 new hovercraft and builds on an already strong business relationship.

With the delivery of the final craft to India during August 2014, Griffon can point to a fleet of 18 medium lift hovercraft it has designed, built and supplied to the Indian Coastguard.

The company has done nearly a third of its business over the last four years with the country. In addition to the craft, Griffon consistently sells around £300,000 worth of spares every year for the original six-strong fleet. Spares revenue is expected to grow to around £1m on the increased fleet. Griffon is also working on two other large contracts worth more than £90m for the Indian Army, with around 40% of the contract accrued in the UK.

Adrian Went, Managing Director of Griffon Hoverwork, said: "India is a fantastic market

for us as our partners there value the quality of the products we provide.

"While it can be a challenging and complex market for UK businesses to understand and successfully operate in generally, there is a wealth of support for UK companies looking to trade in and with India."

Mr Went said he welcomed the appointment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May as indicative of India becoming more open to business.

'INDIA IS A FANTASTIC MARKET FOR US AS OUR PARTNERS THERE VALUE THE QUALITY OF THE PRODUCTS WE PROVIDE'

Mr Went added: "We have been doing business with India for many years now but are hoping that, with Narendra Modi's pro-business government, it will become easier, with fewer constraints in place."

As well as the manufacturing side, HAN is encouraging British property developers to look at entering the giant Indian real estate market, one of the fastest growing in the world. This follows HAN research among

Indian contacts showing a need for more experience and skills in real estate development. The Ageas Bowl event also addressed issues around bribery and corruption. Speakers advised UK companies interested in India to seek advice before making any commitments.

Amarjit Singh, head of Dutton Gregory's India business group, said: "With the Bribery Act there are safeguards already built in and it extends to agents and dealings in other countries. You have to be on the front foot, but help is available if you comply with the legislation."

Keith Warburton, of Indian-based business development specialists Sannam S4, told the audience: "I would like to say that corruption is a complete and utter myth in India but that is not the truth. However, it tends to be at the big business level and not the small and medium enterprises."

"None of our clients have ever told us of experiencing any corruption. You may decide there are several reasons why you would not go into the Indian market, but corruption should not be one."

Kim Hayward, a partner at BDO, added: "The key message in everything we are saying



At the Ageas Bowl, from left, Jojar Singh, Sandeep Sesodia, Southampton-based Senior Business Manager for RBS Group, and Stewart Dunn, Chief Executive of Hampshire Chamber. Left: a Griffon Hoverwork craft

today is consult and take advice from the start to the end. There is government encouragement for PLCs to export to India and that is great, but exporting is only part of what we should do. Businesses need to internationalise and consider putting branches and subsidiaries out there. Exporting is a good place to begin but business does not start and stop there."

Membership of HAN is free to Hampshire Chamber members. For more information and to register interest, visit www.hampshirechamber.co.uk.

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