

## Indian exports to Africa can touch \$50 bn by 2012: Ficci

A day before India and African heads of state meet for the first-ever India-Africa forum summit, an apex Indian business chamber released a survey saying India should discuss with African countries ways to make business easier in order to double exports to \$50 billion in 2012.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) had conducted a survey on 'Strengthening Economic Engagement between India and Africa' among 41 Indian companies having significant business presence in Africa in diverse fields from automobiles and energy to gems and jewellery.

In recent years, there has been a surge in trade volume between India and Africa that has increased by 285 percent in the last four years to \$25 billion. This has increased Africa's share in India's global trade from 5.8 percent in 2002-03 to 8 percent in 2006-07.

'Given such optimism in trade with African nations, it is felt that doubling of exports to Africa to \$50 billion by 2012 is a distinct possibility,' Ficci said.

According to the survey, Indian companies wanted the government to adopt more pro-active measures to encourage trade, like entering into preferential trade agreements with individual countries and regional economic communities and enhancing the lines of credit to African countries. They called for a special package to push Indian exports into African markets.

Besides, the survey called for strengthening the trade promotion cell and economic sections in Indian embassies and high commissions located in Africa.

A public private partnership initiative to create 'Africa Promotion Council' was recommended, which could have sub-councils focussing on each of the five regions in the African continent.

Further, Indian companies called attention to barriers encountered in realising the trade potential with Africa - from prohibitive costs of shipping and shortage of shipping line to high transaction costs and delay in obtaining visas.

'Brand India is still in infancy in many of the African countries. There is a need to promote products from India in the African countries. This is particularly important if we are to add more and new products to our export basket,' said the survey report.

The two-day India-Africa summit to be inaugurated Tuesday will be attended by 14 African countries - ten of them represented by their heads of state. This is part of a concerted effort by India to increase its imprint on the continent as it faces stiff competition from China to tap Africa's considerable resources in energy and minerals.

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