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# Indian students now break new barriers

## Student Programme With Belgium Gets Push

**Nirmala M Nagaraj | TNN**

Ghent (Belgium): Is culture still a barrier with thousands of Indian students opting to study abroad and with increasing business collaborations with European companies? The launch of India Platform recently at Ghent University for nurturing academic collaboration and encouraging an exchange programme between India and Europe proves otherwise.

Bridging the new interest in the West about India is one of the objectives of the India Platform. Leading the vision of the event, Prof S N Balagangadhara, director of research centre, Comparative Science of Culture at Ghent University, stressed the need for a student exchange programme for knowledge enrichment. The inaugural debate was on 'Collaboration between Europe and India: Is Culture a Barrier' between Ajit Shetty from Janssen Pharmaceutica and Johnson and Johnson, Shankar Prasad from InKroma E-business Solutions and Prof Balagangadhara.

At the event, NRIs and Indian students shared their experiences on staying abroad and some of them argued on culture not being a barrier. India Platform mission, Ghent University director Dr Paul Van Cauwenberge said, was encouraged by the performance of China Platform and Africa Platform. Now with this new initiative, they are looking forward to collaborating with more Indian universities for an encouraging research programme in Europe.

This platform will also be coordinating the 25 agreements with various universities in India. “I have visited India before but I am looking forward to accompanying the King of Belgium on his royal visit to India in November,” said Dr Paul Van Cauwenberge. The historical Ghent city has housed close to 32,000 students with 2,200 students from other countries, including 80 from India. A truly student-friendly environment with a campus spread across the historical city in the midst of the heritage structures is inspirational. Not surprisingly, some of the stewards are students from India, pursuing their masters programme while working parttime to meet their expenses.

After staying abroad for 35 years and heading a research institute on Comparative Science of Culture, Prof Balagangadhara is all set to rejuvenate social science research in the state, through the Karnataka Academy of Social Science and Humanities. Apart from nurturing research, the academy would be focusing on formulating proper curriculum at the universities on par with international standards.

**(This correspondent was in Ghent on an invitation by the university)**

