

Telecommunications Commission] adds an element of familiarity and should give Canadian companies an added advantage.

The environmental problems generated by India's population growth and the rapidly diversifying industrial base have created a tremendous need for environmental goods, services and technologies. The market, currently estimated to be about US\$500 million, is expected to grow at an annual rate of 20 to 25 per cent. Historically, India's regulatory regime has caused problems for foreign firms attempting to access this market. This is steadily improving, though much work remains. India has adopted new environmental legislation, most import controls have been removed, and stricter enforcement is being introduced.

The Indian market presents a wealth of opportunities, particularly for those who, through joint ventures, can match Indian knowledge of the market with Western capabilities. By establishing joint ventures with Indian partners, Canadians can not only reap the short-term benefits of supplying the voracious Indian market, but they can also look forward to the long-term benefits of supplying other Southeast Asian markets.

India's attractiveness as an economic partner for Canada is enormously enhanced when we realize that India is the world's largest functioning democracy. It uses one of Canada's two official languages, English, as a major language of business. It has a fair and independent judiciary, able to adjudicate contentious business issues. It has well-established banking and distribution systems, a strong entrepreneurial tradition, and a highly skilled and well-educated workforce.

However, the limited awareness both in Canada and in India of one another remains an important constraint. In Canada, India's business potential is not fully appreciated. Although there are some distinct market characteristics that may seem overwhelmingly difficult at first, Canadian business must look beyond first impressions. Others, who may have had unfulfilling experiences in India in the past, need to re-examine what the new India has to offer. Equally, if not more important, there is a lack of awareness in India of Canadian competitive strengths.

To help alleviate this problem, we are, as part of our Focus India strategy, initiating more face-to-face contacts at the government, business and academic level. This includes a series of high-level visits between Canada and India. There have already been several, including my visit to New Delhi and Bombay with a large business delegation last October, and my colleague, Raymond Chan's visit in March. We anticipate additional high-level visits and trade missions to India over the next year.

Plans are also under way for several Indian ministers to lead trade missions to Canada this year.. The Minister of Petroleum and Natural