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## ... but business travellers fret

**Brussels:** The Europe India Chamber of Commerce (EICC) sent a letter to the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and to European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, complaining of serious difficulties faced by Indian businessmen and tourists in obtaining a visa for the EU.

"In spite of the best efforts from all sides to increase Indo-European trade relations, we notice how difficult it is to get a Schengen Visa even for a bonafide Indian corporate executive," said Sunil Prasad, secretary general of the Brussels-based EICC, in the letter.

The trade body expressed concerns that "in spite of all demanded and genuine supporting documentation with the application, the visa departments of EU member states in their respective Embassies in India, are known to show total callousness and disrespect."

"Stringent enforcement of EU countries visa policy is not only scaring away Indian tourists to Europe but also dampening the investment climate of the EU countries thus taking a toll on its economy," noted the letter.

"The Embassies tend to behave in a highly arbitrary manner seeking very unreasonable and sometimes personal and confidential information....

"The methods and techniques of the Embassies of the EU member states in India amount to unwarranted obstruction in free and smooth trade flows and this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed," it said.

The letter underlined that Indians who visit Europe for tourism and business purposes "always respect and abide by the laws of the land."

The EICC called for EU intervention to resolve the visa problem. "Practical and meaningful visa policy towards India which will help build stronger foundation for better co-operation in future," it stressed.

A separate letter was sent to the Prime Minister of Belgium, Guy Verhofstadt, by the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), Belgium, calling on Belgian authorities to facilitate visas for Indian businessmen.

Belgium is India's second largest trade partner in the European Union, with trade turnover estimated to be around 3.1 billion Euro (\$ 4 billion) in 2004.

There is a lot of potential for increasing cooperation between the two countries and removing restrictions on visa and work permits for professionals and businessman moving from India to Europe will facilitate greater bilateral engagement, said the letter. INEP

### What is a Schengen Visa?

Schengen Visa is a unified visa system put in place by as many as 15 European Union countries that are part of a treaty to end internal border check points and controls. Travelling in Europe has been simplified with the introduction of the Schengen visa, as with a Schengen visa, you may enter one country and travel freely throughout the Schengen zone.

The 15 Schengen countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. All these countries except Norway and Iceland are European Union members.

# THE HINDU

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## **EU asked to resolve visa difficulties for Indians**

London, May 19. (PTI): The Europe India Chamber of Commerce has asked the European Union (EU) to resolve serious difficulties faced by Indian businessmen and tourists in obtaining a visa for EU.

"In spite of the best efforts from all sides to increase Indo-European trade relations, we notice how difficult it is to get a Schengen Visa even for a bona fide Indian corporate executive," said Sunil Prasad, Secretary General of the Brussels-based EICC, in a letter to European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

The trade body expressed concern that "in spite of providing all documents with the application, the visa departments of EU member states in their respective Embassies in India, are known to show total callousness and disrespect".

"Stringent enforcement of EU countries' visa policy is not only scaring away Indian tourists to Europe but also dampening the investment climate of the EU countries thus taking a toll on its economy," the letter noted.

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## EU asked to resolve visa problems

UK Bureau

London, May 19, 2005

The Europe India Chamber of Commerce (EICC) has sent a letter to the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso and to European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, complaining of serious difficulties faced by Indian businessmen and tourists in obtaining a visa for the EU.

"In spite of the best efforts from all sides to increase Indo-European trade relations, we notice how difficult it is to get a Schengen Visa even for a bonafide Indian corporate executive," Sunil Prasad, secretary general of the Brussels-based EICC, has pointed out in the letter.

The trade body expressed concerns that "in spite of all demanded and genuine supporting documentation with the application, the visa departments of EU member states in their respective Embassies in India, are known to show total callousness and disrespect.

"Stringent enforcement of EU countries visa policy is not only scaring away Indian tourists to Europe but also dampening the investment climate of the EU countries thus taking a toll on its economy."

A copy of the letter sent to Brussels news service, INEP, reads, "The Embassies tend to behave in a highly arbitrary manner seeking very unreasonable and sometimes personal and confidential information....

"The methods and techniques of the Embassies of the EU member state in India amount to unwarranted obstruction in free and smooth trade flows and this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed."

The letter underlined that Indians who visit Europe for tourism and business purposes "always respect and abide by the laws of the land."

Indians in the UK who do not have British passport are facing similar problems. Media persons face great difficulty if they have to suddenly go to any other country for reporting. Since 9/11, a voice on the automated telephone, gives the date for an interview. There is hardly anyway to establish contact with the visa section of the EU countries to explain the urgency. Only the French seem to have realised this and made things a bit easier.

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<http://www.zeenews.com/znnew/index.html>



### **Trade body urges EU to resolve visa difficulties for Indians**

London, May 18: The Europe India Chamber of Commerce today asked the European Union (EU) to resolve serious difficulties faced by Indian businessmen and tourists in obtaining a visa for EU.

"In spite of the best efforts from all sides to increase Indo-European trade relations, we notice how difficult it is to get a Schengen visa even for a bonafide Indian corporate executive," said Sunil Prasad, Secretary General of the Brussels-based EICC, in a letter to European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

The trade body expressed concern that "in spite of providing all documents with the application, the visa departments of EU member states in their respective embassies in India, are known to show total callousness and disrespect.

"Stringent enforcement of EU countries visa policy is not only scaring away Indian tourists to Europe but also dampening the investment climate of the EU countries thus taking a toll on its economy," the letter noted.

It said Indians who visit Europe for tourism and business purposes "always respect and abide by the laws of the land."

A separate letter was sent to the Prime Minister of Belgium, Guy Verhofstadt, by the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (Gopio), Belgium, calling on Belgian authorities to facilitate visas for Indian businessmen.

Belgium is India's second largest trade partner in the European Union, with trade turnover estimated at 4 million dollars in 2004.

Bureau Report



18.05.2005

## Indian Trade Body Urges EU to Resolve Visa Difficulties



How successful is the EU?

**The Europe India Chamber of Commerce (EICC) sent a letter Wednesday to the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso and to European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, complaining of serious difficulties faced by Indian businessmen and tourists in obtaining a visa for the EU.**

### Difficulties in getting visa

"In spite of the best efforts from all sides to increase Indo-European trade relations, we notice how difficult it is to get a Schengen Visa even for a bona fide Indian corporate executive," said Sunil Prasad, secretary general of the Brussels-based EICC, in the letter.

The trade body expressed concerns that "in spite of all demanded and genuine supporting documentation with the application, the visa departments of EU member states in their respective Embassies in India, are known to show total callousness and disrespect."

"Stringent enforcement of EU countries visa policy is not only scaring away Indian tourists to Europe but also dampening the investment climate of the EU countries thus taking a toll on its economy," noted the letter.

### Objectionable processing practice

A copy of the letter was made available to INEP. "The Embassies tend to behave in a highly arbitrary manner seeking very unreasonable and sometimes personal and confidential information...."

"The methods and techniques of the Embassies of the EU member states in India amount to unwarranted obstruction in free and smooth trade flows and this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed," it said.

The letter underlined that Indians who visit Europe for tourism and business purposes "always respect and abide by the laws of the land."

The EICC called for EU intervention to resolve the visa problem. "Practical and meaningful visa policy towards India which will help build stronger foundation for better co-operation in future," it stressed.

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There are lots of potentials for increasing cooperation between the two countries and removing restrictions on visa and work permits for professionals and businessman moving from India to Europe will facilitate greater bilateral engagement, said the letter.

*INEP / dw staff (sb)*

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