

Larsen Foundation to showcase India in Denmark

By M RAMESH

Recently in Denmark:

HENNING HOLCK-LARSEN, WHO founded Larsen & Toubro along with a fellow Dane Soren Kristian Toubro back in 1938, was a Indophile and it is, therefore, not surprising that the Holck-Larsen Foundation has 'India' in its DNA. An expression of the genes has surfaced in the form of an 'India Today' project that is to get underway in Copenhagen in August.

The logo of the project has 'India Today' displayed prominently with the words 'Copenhagen Tomorrow' written under it rather unobtrusively — obviously making clear where the accent lies.

The project has many features, the first of which will be the sponsorship of an art exhibition. The exhibition, which will exclusively showcase contemporary Indian art, will cost \$ 2.3 million. The Foundation is shelling out \$ 1.4 million and the Danes acknowledge the "great support" of \$500,000 by L&T.

Perhaps underscoring the point that no one can separate India and movies, there will be a film festival featuring Indian cinema, including documentary films. Furthermore, scholarships amounting to \$3 million (equally funded by the Foundation and the Bangalore-based Danish company Novozymes) have been announced for students of life sciences.

Briefing visiting Indian journalists last week in Copenhagen, Steen Lassen, Chairman of the Henning Holck-Larsen Foundation, spoke of India's virtues in terms of "family values and respect for elders which we have to re-adopt."

As a coincidence that augurs well for the 'India Today' project, the Danish National Research Foundation has decided to provide a grant of \$10 million for project-based distribution to leading Indian research institutions.



*Steen Lassen, chairman of the
Henning Holck-Larsen Foundation*

Says the Foundation's Web site: The purpose of 'India Today Copenhagen Tomorrow' is to link the people of India and Denmark in the true spirit of Holck-Larsen by promoting exchange of culture, science and trade between the two countries."

It was noted by people in the Foundation that India and Denmark enjoy sound commercial relationship. Indian IT companies, notably TCS, HCL, L&T Infotech and Cognizant, are well entrenched in Denmark. Several Danish companies — Danfoss, Grundfos, Novozymes — are market leaders in their spheres in India.

The 'India Today' project is to link up the two countries in the other dimensions of art and culture.

The timing of the project has, however, an added significance. It is hoped (though this is not explicitly stated) that the project will help dissipate the cloud that has formed over the two countries over the 'Kim Davy extradition' issue.

After the Danish High Court refused permission to extradite Niels Holck, better known in India as Kim Davy, for a trial in India for his alleged involvement in the 'Purulia arms dropping case', the political relationship between the two countries has gone a little cold — something that was confirmed to Indian journalists by the Indian diplomacy in Copenhagen.

The Danish High Court refused permission on the grounds that Kim Davy could be subjected to torture in India has not gone down well in India, leaving Home Minister P Chidambaram, "very disappointed".

But for this, the India Today festival could well have been inaugurated by the President of India.

The honour is now likely to go to the Union Minister for Human Resources, Kapil Sibal, an old friend of Steen Larsen.