

The Economic Times
Kolkata, 3 February 2007

Publishers find food for thought Down Under
Australian Book Trade Creates Links With Labels Like Penguin, Picador, Viva,
HarperCollins & Rupa

Ashoke Nag
KOLKATA

THERE is a strong kangaroo connection brewing in the Indian publishing world. The Aussies are getting proactive in building bridges between the \$1.1-billion Australian publishing industry and publishers in India. Movements in this direction have already been triggered with translations of leading Australian poets appearing in India. Together with independent Indian publishers, the Australian book trade has also created links with larger India labels like Penguin India, Picador India, Viva Books, HarperCollins India and Rupa & Co, which have produced works by Australian literateurs.

"We have been focusing on this project for the past three years or so. One has been working on this plan with active support from the Australian High Commission and Australia-India Council. All the organisations have together to fuel tours by Australian authors and poets in India. We have brought authors like Peter Carey and Kate

Grenville. Carey is a Booker winner and Grenville won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2006," Ms Nikki Anderson, literature program officer of Asialink, told ET.

Asialink, a centre in the The University of Melbourne, fuels connections between Australia and Asia in the fields of art, education, politics, public programs and healthcare. According to Anderson, Asialink has worked with publishers like Penguin India to come up with a local edition of 7-8 Australian authors. In recent times, other titles by Australian authors have also surfaced in the Indian market.

Picador India has also published a book titled *The Last Nizam*, authored by John Zubzycki. In the same breath, Viva Books has turned out the *Black Juice* by Margo Lanagan, while Harper Collins India has published a *Bem Le Hunte* title. Rupa & Co has also chipped in to distribute a book by another Australian author Thomas Keneally. "More and more Indian publishers are interested to publish Australian authors," she said.

"Probably the most famous Australian poet, Les Murray, has also been translated in five Indian regional languages including Bengali," said Ron Pretty, a leading Australian poet himself who also runs the Five Islands Press.

"There is a mutual interest between Australia and India because of shared history and language. So, all the programs are built on this existing respect. All this time, the Indian authors have always been available in Australia through the UK route and vice versa. But, what we are trying to do is to create direct connections between Australian and Indian writers and Australian and Indian publishers. This will help us develop direct cultural and trade links. We are still dealing on a colonial understanding. These recent publications are a fabulous example of how this cultural exchange is translating into real results," Ms Anderson said.

She went on to add that a dialogue will be opened between Indian and Australian publishers so that the deals happen directly. "We are working with the Australian Trade Commission to explore publishing opportunities. The trade commission has floated the idea of taking a delegation of Indian publishers to Australia. These will include Indian outfits who are keen to learn more about Australia. It is also to inform Australian publishers about the scope to publish Indian writers. Indian authors are also being invited to Writers Festivals across Australia," Ms Anderson said.

