

Indian DIASPORA

Why in News?

The Ministry of External Affairs has established the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in the 43 Indian Missions across the world in countries that have a significant overseas Indian population.

Who constitutes Indian Diaspora?

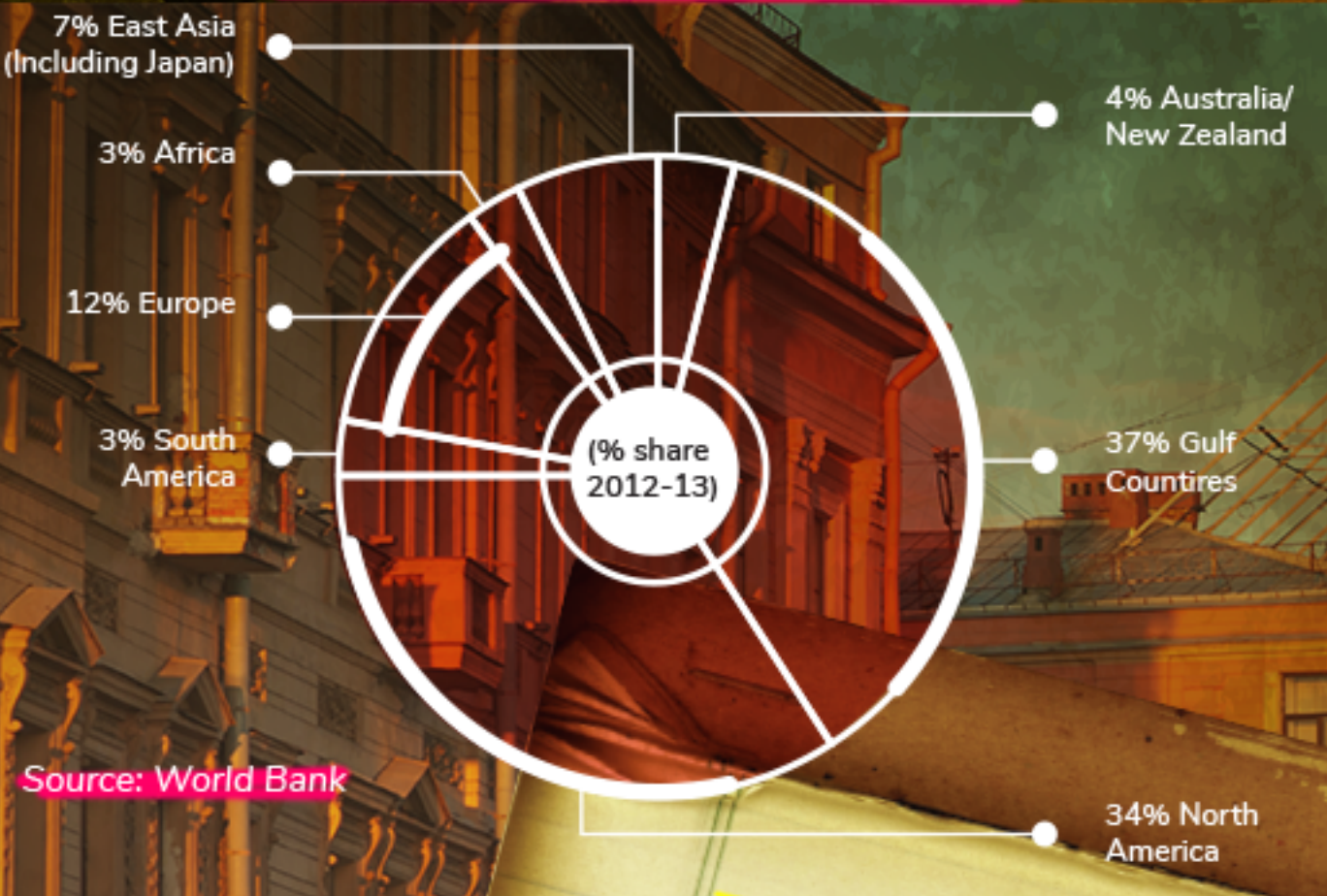
The Indian Diaspora is a generic term to describe the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India. It also refers to their descendants.

Indian Diaspora is composed of "NRIs" (Indians not residing in India) and "PIOs" (Persons of Indian Origin who have acquired the citizenship of some other country).

India has the largest diaspora population in the world with over 15.6 million according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The biggest proportion of them are in the United Arab Emirates, where 3.5 million Indians make up 30% of the population and are the largest expatriate group, according to the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi.

Sources of Remittances to India



The Indian Community Welfare Fund

ICWF is aimed at providing 'on site' welfare services on a means tested basis in the most deserving cases including:

- Boarding and lodging for distressed overseas Indian workers in household/ domestic sectors and unskilled labourers.
- Extending emergency medical care to the overseas Indians in need.
- Providing air passage to stranded overseas Indians in need.
- Providing initial legal assistance to the overseas Indians in deserving cases.
- Expenditure on incidentals and for airifting the mortal remains to India or local cremation/burial of the deceased overseas Indian in such cases where a sponsor is unable or unwilling to do so as per the contract and the family is unable to meet the cost.

BACKGROUND

During the 1950s and 1960s, establishing a special relationship with the diaspora was not a priority of India's foreign policy. The diaspora, on the other hand, was advised to live up to its loyalty to the host country. Only cultural links with the home country were emphasized on appropriate occasions.

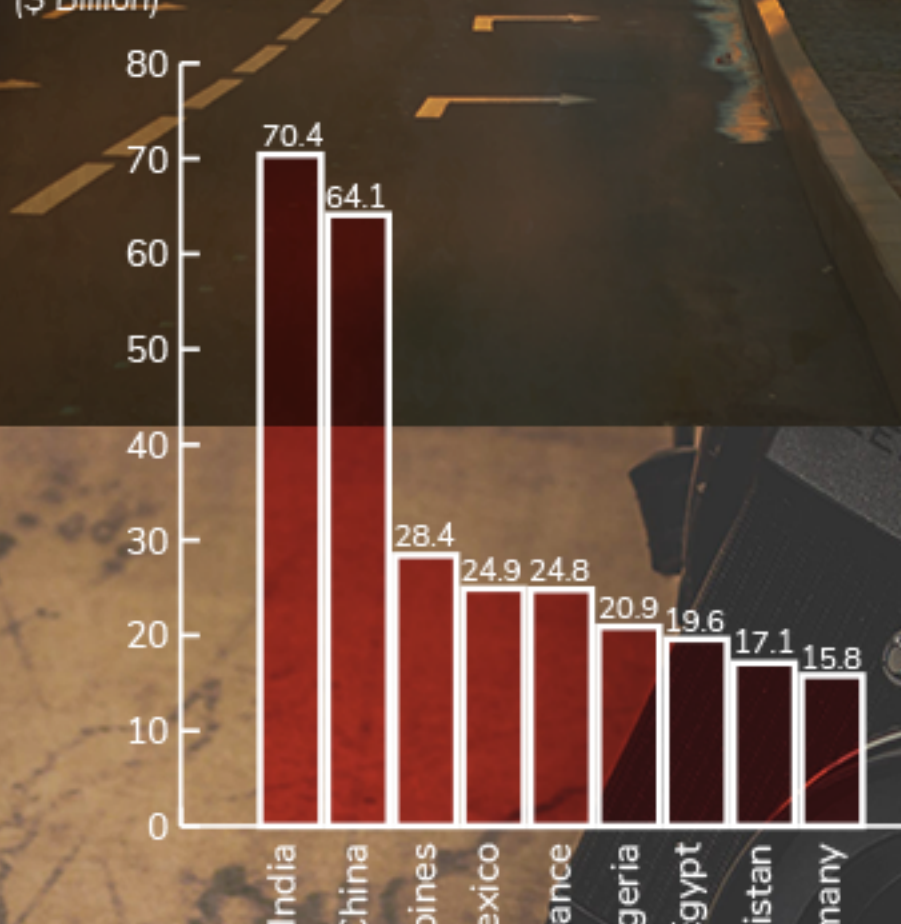
The situations changed first in 1970s-80s and later in 1990s after India adopted the LPG policy.

The Indian diaspora has acquired a higher status and respect in their countries of residence both because of their contributions in varied fields and on account of the higher status acquired by India in the comity of nations by virtue of its dynamic economy and contribution in other fields.

The government has also become responsible towards its diaspora as reflected by various policies and programmes focused on NRIs and People of Indian Origin.

The beginning of this policy shift was heralded by the appointment of a High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora by the Ministry of External Affairs in September 2000. The Diaspora forms the implicit fourth "D" to the "3Ds" ('three Ds'-democracy, demography and demand) of the current Indian government.

Migrant Remittances inflows 2014



Net Remittances into India



Important Schemes and Programmes

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)
- Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards (PBSA)
- Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (RPBD)
- Know India Programme (KIP)
- Study India Programme (SIP)
- Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC)
- Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Card Scheme
- Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians (PMGAC-OI)
- Tracing the Roots programme
- Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (PBK)

Significance of Indian Diaspora

Remittances: India's vast diaspora sends back billions of dollars in remittances every year. With estimated remittance flows of around \$72 billion in 2015 made the South Asian nation receives more expat cash than any other country. World Bank figures show this amounts to 3.4 per cent of India's GDP.

Inflows from NRIs take place in following 3 major forms-

- Private Transfers
- Direct Portfolio Investments
- Deposits

Source of Knowledge Transfer: The diaspora forms an important source of knowledge transfer that they acquire abroad. Foreign countries have a well-defined and improved R&D structure.

Enhancing India's Image: The diaspora's achievements abroad, in different fields like Science, technology, art and culture, etc contribute to India's image. Today Salman Rushdie, Zubin Mehta and Mira Nair are household names all over the world. In business, the Silicon Valley and Wall Street CEOs like Vikram Pandit, Sundar Pichai, etc represent India in the world.

Soft Diplomacy: There are many influential Indians in countries like USA, UK, etc. This influential stratum of Indian diaspora has many times been important in forming lobbies for India's interests.

Contribution in Tourism: When they visit India, they tend to spend more lavishly than the locals, thereby helping economic activity. NRIs are more prone to donating to domestic charities because of the strong cultural and emotional feelings that they nurse.

Transnational Diasporic Networks are contributing significantly towards the integration of national economies into the global political economy by mediating through a complex array of production, circulation and consumption activities.

The **Kafala System** requires all unskilled laborers to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their visa and legal status. Enacted in 2011, the **Nitaqat Law** in Saudi Arabia makes it mandatory for all businesses in the private sector to reserve at least 10% of jobs for Saudi nationals.

Way Forward

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

India has now come to acquire a higher stake than ever before in the performance, status and treatment meted out to the Indian diaspora in the host countries.

This has led to a distinct policy shift in the mother country from relative indifference to greater attention and care of the Indian diaspora.

There are various proposals like to give them voting rights, etc which may provide the community with the much needed trust and faith in the Indian government.

Challenges of Indian Diaspora

Political Issues

Dual Citizenship: There are many among the diaspora community who wish to retain their Indian citizenship along with the citizenship of the country they are residing in.

Differential Labour Rules: Indian diaspora, especially the blue-collar workers, face differential treatment in terms of labour laws. For example, the Kafala System of West Asia.

Also due to increasing preference for local workers the employment security of many Indian workers has been compromised. Example Nitaqat law.

Security Issues

ISIS Issue: Due to increasing threat from ISIS in the middle east region there have been increasing security threats to the Indian diaspora. Indian government had to undertake various rescue operations to help and evacuate the Indians struck in such situations, example- Operation Raahat in Yemen.

Lack of Evacuation Policy: India does not have a well laid out evacuation policy which can improve the operations further.

Economic Issues

Economic slowdown: has led to reduction in global demand and thus reduction in employment opportunities for Indians willing to work outside.

Competition with other countries: Due to increasing competition with the equally competitive labour force from countries like China and Philippines, Indian workers are losing job opportunities abroad.