



Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

For Prelims: [Pravasi Bharatiya Divas \(PBD\)](#), [Classification of Indian Diaspora](#), [Mahatma Gandhi](#), [Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee](#)

For Mains: Indian Diaspora: Contribution to Viksit Bharat, Related Challenges and Schemes, Way Forward

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

[Pravasi Bharatiya Divas \(PBD\)](#), observed biennially on 9th January, is a noteworthy event that celebrates the contributions of the [Indian diaspora](#) to their homeland.

- The **18th PBD Convention** is being organised by Odisha from 8th to 10th January 2025, with the theme '**Diaspora's Contribution to a [Viksit Bharat](#) (Developed India)**'.

What is Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)?

- **Background & History:** This bi-annual celebration **commemorates the day in 1915 when [Mahatma Gandhi](#), the greatest Pravasi (migrant), returned to India from South Africa** to lead the country's [freedom struggle](#).
- **Primary Goals of PBD:**
 - To commemorate the contributions of the Indian diaspora to India's development.
 - To create a better understanding of India abroad.
 - To support India's causes and work for the welfare of local Indian communities worldwide.
 - To provide a platform for overseas Indians to engage with the government and people of their ancestral land.
- **PBD Conventions:**
 - The **PBD Convention was first established in 2003** under the government of then Prime Minister Late [Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee](#), as a platform to recognise and engage with the overseas Indian community.
 - **18th PBD Convention, 2025:**
 - During the Convention, the Prime Minister of India **inaugurated the Pravasi Bharatiya Express**, a special tourist train for the Indian diaspora.
 - The Pravasi Bharatiya Express was **conducted under the Pravasi Teertha Darshan Yojana** of the [Ministry of External Affairs](#).
 - An exhibition was also inaugurated to showcase rare documents of people who **migrated from Mandvi in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman**.
 - PM highlighted the **significance of Girmitiyas** (indentured laborers from pre-independent India) who were **sent to countries like Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, and others**.
 - It was also **suggested to create a comprehensive database of the Girmitiyas**.

▪ Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA):

- The award, given out as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya programme, is the **highest honour** conferred on a **Non-Resident Indian (NRI)**, **Person of Indian Origin (PIO)**; or an organisation or **institution established and run by them**.
- The award is to commemorate the **contribution of the Indian diaspora to create a better understanding of India abroad**, support India's causes and work for the welfare of the local Indian community.

What is Diaspora?

▪ Background & Origin:

- The term diaspora **traces its roots to the Greek *diaspeiro***, which means dispersion. The Indian diaspora has grown manifold since the first batch of Indians were taken to countries in the east pacific and the **Caribbean islands** under the '**Girmitiya**' arrangement as indentured labourers.

▪ Classification of Diaspora:

- **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs):** NRIs are **Indians who are residents of foreign countries**. A person is considered NRI if:
 - A person is a **non-resident** if they are in India for **less than 182 days in a year** or **less than 365 days** in the preceding 4 years and less than 60 days in the current year.
- **Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs):** PIO **refers to a foreign citizen (previously held an Indian passport)** who or their parents/grandparents born in India or who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO.
 - Nationals of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal **are not included in the PIO classification**.
 - The **PIO category was abolished in 2015** and merged with the OCI category.
- **Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs):** A separate category of **OCI** was carved out in 2005.
 - An OCI card is **granted to a foreign national** who was eligible for Indian citizenship on **26th January 1950** or belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15th August 1947.
 - Minor children of such individuals, (excluding nationals of Pakistan and Bangladesh), were also eligible for OCI cards.

Geographical Distribution of Overseas Indians

Country	Overseas Indian
USA	5,409,062
UK	1,864,318
UAE	3,568,848
South Africa	1,700,000
Saudi Arabia	2,463,509
Myanmar	2,002,660
Malaysia	2,914,127
Kuwait	995,528
Oman	686,635
Canada	2,875,954

How Indian Diaspora Can Contribute to Viksit Bharat?

- **Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth:** The Indian diaspora drives economic growth in India through **remittances** and **investments**.
 - By connecting Indian businesses to international markets and fostering partnerships, they **enhance India's business ecosystem**, empower underserved regions, and support

the nation's goal of becoming a developed economy.

- **For example:** A thorium-based fuel, [ANEEL](#), invented by a US based NRI, is set to be implemented **in India for clean nuclear energy.**
- **Promote Global Trade Linkages:** By **facilitating cross-border partnerships, investment flows**, and knowledge exchange, the diaspora helps expand India's export base, diversify trade relationships, and promote India's products and services globally.
- **Supporting Innovation Ecosystem:** Diaspora-led trade partnerships in emerging markets also offer **opportunities for mutual growth**. Through shared resources and joint ventures, these partnerships can accelerate India's entry into high-growth global markets, further enhancing its development prospects.
- **Diaspora's Role in Tackling Global Challenges:** The diaspora's active involvement in promoting and supporting grassroots environmental efforts, and advocating for climate action can significantly contribute to India's global leadership in [sustainable development](#).
 - By leveraging its international influence, **the diaspora can help shape global policies**, bringing attention to issues that align with India's development goals.
- **Enhance Cultural Linkages:** The **Indian diaspora** (act as cultural ambassadors) can **enhance cultural linkages** by promoting Indian traditions, art, and heritage in their host countries through events, festivals, and cultural exchanges.
 - Declaring Diwali as a holiday in several states in the US is **a prime example of cultural exchange**.

What are the Challenges Related to Indian Diaspora?

- **Identity and Integration:** Many members of the Indian diaspora face challenges in balancing their **cultural identity with the pressures of integrating into the societies** they live in. This can lead to a sense of alienation or loss of [cultural heritage](#).
 - Differences in **cultural values** often lead to conflicts, such as **child custody cases in countries like Norway and Germany**, where local laws may not align with Indian cultural practices and familial norms.
- **Politicization and Religious Phobia:** Increasing instances of politicization and religious bias, especially targeting **Hindus and Sikhs in Western countries like the USA and Europe**, contribute to social alienation and hinder community integration.
- **Legal and Citizenship Issues:** Issues related to **visa status, citizenship rights**, and the complexities of immigration laws can affect the Indian diaspora, particularly in countries with restrictive [immigration policies](#).
 - The increasing backlash against Indian immigrants in the US over the [H-1B visa](#) has fueled resentment among Indians, despite their significant contributions.
- **Challenges in Remittances:** Economic instability, exchange rate fluctuations, or banking issues can affect the flow of remittances from the diaspora to India, impacting families who rely on this support.

Government Initiatives Related to the Welfare of Indian Diaspora

- [National Pension Scheme for NRIs](#)
- [Online Services for Voters](#)
- [Know India Program](#)
- [Overseas Citizenship of India \(OCI\) Card Scheme](#)
- [Indian Community Welfare Fund \(ICWF\)](#)
- Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra
- India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI)

Way Forward

- **Legal Protection and Rights:** Ensuring that the legal rights of the diaspora are safeguarded in their host countries, including access to equal opportunities, protection from [discrimination](#), and fair treatment under immigration laws.

- **Strengthening Consular Support:** Providing accessible and efficient consular services, including assistance with legal and financial issues, to address the needs of the diaspora. **Regular outreach programs and advisory services can help** strengthen ties with the homeland.
- **Promoting Social Integration:** Promoting social inclusion through cultural exchange, education, and community activities fosters dialogue and understanding between diaspora and host communities.
 - For example, in situations where **cultural differences often cause misunderstandings** and conflicts, **it is essential to cultivate an environment that values acceptance** and respects diversity.
- **Supporting Economic Engagement:** Encouraging investment in India by offering incentives like tax breaks, financial support for **startups**, and simplified investment processes.
 - To **better facilitate remittance acceptance, India can expand the use of technologies like UPI** for **cross-border transactions**, similar to the system with Singapore.
- **Skill Development and Knowledge Transfer:** Promoting programs that facilitate knowledge exchange between the diaspora and India, particularly in technology, entrepreneurship, and education.
 - It would help in skill development and innovation back in India, benefiting both sides.

Conclusion

As India moves toward the centenary of its independence, a **shared vision for 2047** must include continuous and structured diaspora involvement. This **involves defining a long-term roadmap with specific milestones** and engaging the youth diaspora, whose innovative ideas and global exposure can greatly contribute to India's development goals. Strengthening these ties will help build a brighter, more connected future. Through collaboration and shared purpose, we can harness the strength of our global community to achieve a vibrant and prosperous India by 2047.

Drishti Mains Question

Analyze the Indian diaspora's role in achieving the 'Viksit Bharat' vision.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. The Indian Diaspora has an important role to play in South East Asian countries economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian Diaspora in South-East Asia in this context. **(2017)**

Q. 'Indian diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries'. Comment with examples. **(2020)**