

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1793
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.02.2019

INTERACTION OF OVERSEAS INDIANS

1793. SHRI PARVESH SAHIB SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of new initiatives taken by the Government for interaction of overseas Indians with India in the fields of Culture, Education and Trade;
- (b) the details of recent developments in communication and marketing strategies for ensuring strong links with overseas Indian community; and
- (c) the details of major instances of successful cooperation and guidance provided by the Government with States in matters of overseas Indians within last four years?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

- (a) Since 2014, several new initiatives have been taken and old programmes have been revamped by the Government for interaction of overseas Indians with India in the fields of Culture, Education and Trade.

The new initiatives taken by the Government are as below:

The **Know India Programme (KIP)** is a flagship initiative of the Government to reconnect young persons of Indian-origin with their roots and give them an exposure to various aspects of Indian life, cultural heritage, art and contemporary India. The frequency of KIP has been increased from 2 to 6 editions in a year. The duration of the programme is increased from 21 to 25 days, the age of participants is increased from 18 to 26 to 18 to 30 years. More states can now be made partners in this programme with increased duration of the state leg from 7 to 10 days. In the last four and half years, 1060 young persons of Indian-origin participated in KIP programme.

Besides, the Government has initiated a special Know India Programme titled **"Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana"** for the people of Indian Origin (PIOs) in the age group of 45-60 years to connect them to the spiritual and religious aspects of India. This programme is aimed to help them visit India on an organized pilgrimage, paid for by the government of India, and have an all round exposure to all faiths in India. Two editions are organized every year.

The **1st PIO-Parliamentarian Conference** was also held on January 9, 2018 in New Delhi, with an aim to strengthen the engagement with the Overseas Indians. The one-day Conference was attended by 137 sitting PIO Parliamentarians and Mayors from 24 countries.

Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is celebrated every two years. The **15th PBD Convention** was held from 21 to 23 January 2019 in Varanasi with Uttar Pradesh as the Partner State. In reverence to the sentiments of the larger diaspora, participants were offered to participate in **Kumbh Mela** at Prayagraj on 24 January, 2019 and to witness the **Republic Day Parade at New Delhi** on 26 January, 2019. In the spirit of “Atithi Devo Bhava”, the delegates were also offered hospitality in the homes of Kashi citizens under “**Kashi ka Athitya**” programme.

Under a new initiative since 2015, theme-based **PBD Conferences** are held on topics of concern to our diaspora with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policy makers and stakeholders. The result of these conferences are presented in the plenary sessions that are held in the PBD Convention. Their recommendations are then evaluated and implemented, which gives our diaspora an opportunity to play an important role in policy formulation of the Government.

The **Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children** (SPDC), which was launched to make higher education in Indian Universities/Institutions accessible to diaspora children and promote India as a centre for higher studies, is now extended from 100 to 150 scholarships and from 40 to 67 countries. The scholarship amount has been increased from US\$ 3600 to US\$ 4000 per student per annum. The eligibility requirement of monthly income of parents is relaxed from US\$2250/- to US\$ 4000/- per month and the documentation process is eased by introducing self-attestation of documents. Of the 150 scholarships, 50 are given to the children of CIWG (children of Indians working in Gulf) of which 1/3rd slots are reserved for wards of CIWG living and studying in India. SPDC is now also extended to wards of Indians living in Nepal (as they are not entitled to OCI/PIO/NRI status).

Besides, the Ministry of Culture operates **Scheme for Promotion of International Cultural Relations** under which Festivals of India are organized abroad showcasing folk art and other cultural events such as exhibitions, dance, music, theatre, food festival, literary festival, film festival, yoga etc. Under this Scheme, Ministry of Culture also gives grant-in-aid to Indo Foreign Friendship Cultural Societies for organizing cultural programmes and activities abroad.

Ministry of External Affairs supports the diaspora to organise the cultural events under the **Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora** (PCTD) scheme with an aim to showcase Indian culture and new initiatives & developments of modern India. Under the guidelines of ICWF, all the HoMs have also been delegated powers to spend money on these events.

(b) Prime Minister and other senior Ministers also visit and interact with the Indian Community and also with the CEOs of the diaspora, which has also helped in developing strong links with overseas Indian community.

(c) The External Affairs Minister holds regular interactions with the Chief Ministers and senior ministers of different states to discuss all Indian Community and Labour issues. With the efforts of government of India, NRI departments have been set up in almost all the states.

The government has been organizing **MEA-State Government outreach** events under the banner “**Videsh Sampark**” to seek cooperation in addressing issues pertaining to welfare and protection of our citizens abroad and brief the State Government about Ministry’s initiatives pertaining to engagement and

welfare of the overseas Indian community and curbing illegal migration. Five Outreach Events have been organized in partnership with the State Governments of Telangana, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

During the last one and half year, **Awareness Generation and Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshops** have been conducted in eight states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Rajasthan, Punjab, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal in coordination with the concerned Departments of the State Government for generating awareness and to sensitize participants about the benefits of safe, orderly and regular migration and welfare and protection measures of the Government for the migrant workers. These workshops were aimed at capacity building of States to enable them to take the **Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO)** programmes at the grass-root level in the major labour sending districts.

The **Videsh Bhavan** buildings, which are set up in every state, are offering the services of Passport, PG, ICCR and Pre-departure orientation training (PDOT) programmes under one single roof.
