# Indian Diaspora

## Why in news?

*On the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Prime Minister said that Indians living overseas are "brand ambassadors" of the country on foreign soil.*

> *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India on January 9, 1915 from South Africa.*

## What is the history of the Indian expat?

> *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 counties in the east pacific and the Caribbean islands under the **'Girmitiya' arrangement** as indentured labourers.
- The 19th and early 20th centuries saw thousands of Indians shipped to those countries to work on plantations in British colonies, which were reeling under a labour crisis due to the abolition of slavery in 1833-34.
- As part of the second wave of migration, nearly 20 lakh Indians went to Singapore and Malaysia to work in farms.
- Third and fourth wave saw professionals heading to western countries and workers going to the Gulf and west Asian countries in the wake of the oil boom.

## What is the classification?

- Overseas Indians are classified into three categories:
    1. Non-Resident Indians (NRI),
    2. Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs),
    3. Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs).
- **NRI** - NRIs are Indians who are residents of foreign countries.
- **PIO** - PIO category was abolished in 2015 and merged with the OCI category.
- However, existing PIO cards are valid till December 31, 2023, by which the holders of these cards have to obtain OCI cards.
- PIO refers to a foreign citizen (except a national of some nations)
    - who at any time held an Indian passport, or
    - who or either of their parents/ grandparents/great grandparents was born and permanently resided in India as defined in Government of India Act, 1935, or

    - who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO.

*PIO doesn't include foreign citizens from Pakistan, Afghanistan Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.*

- **OCI** - A separate category of OCI was carved out in 2006.
- An OCI card was given to a foreign national who was eligible to be a citizen of India on January 26, 1950,
    - was a citizen of India on or at any time after January 26, 1950, or
    - belonged to a territory that became part of India after August 15, 1947.
- Minor children of such individuals, except those who were a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh, were also eligible for OCI cards.

## What are some data on Indian diaspora?

- According to a 2022 report of the Parliamentary committee on external affairs, as on December 31, 2021, there were 4.7 crore Indians living overseas. The number includes NRIs, PIOs, OCIs, and students.
- Excluding students, the number stands at 3.22 crore, including 1.87 crore PIOs and 1.35 crore NRIs.
- According to the World Migration Report (of the International Organisation for Migration), India has the largest emigrant population in the world, followed by Mexico, Russian and China.

- Numbers shared by the government in Parliament in 2022 show that the geographical spread of the Indian diaspora is vast.
- The countries with over 10 lakh overseas Indians include USA (44 lakh), UAE (34 lakh), Malaysia (29.8 lakh), Saudi Arabia (26 lakh), Myanmar (20 lakh), United Kingdom (17.6 lakh), Canada (16.8 lakh), Sri Lanka (16 lakh), South Africa (15.6 lakh) and Kuwait (10.2 lakh).

## What is the remittance level?

- According to the World Bank, remittances are a vital source of household income for low- and middle-income countries like India.
- According to the latest World Bank Migration and Development Brief (2022), "For the first time a single country, India, is on track to receive more than $100 billion in yearly remittances."
- According to the World Migration Report, India, China, Mexico, the Philippines and Egypt are among the top 5 remittance recipient countries, "although India and China were well above the rest".

*According to the World Migration Report, in 2020, India and China received the largest amounts of international remittances in Asia, with a combined total of more than $140 billion.*

**Reference**

[Indian Express | Indians abroad: History, spread, remittances]

