Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

What is Pravasi Bharthiya Divas?

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- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated in India on 9 January every other year (every year before 2016) to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India.
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- It commemorates the day Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1915.
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- It is sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs
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- The 15th edition of Pravasi Divas in 2016 is in Bengaluru.
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When it started?

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- In 2002, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee decided to celebrate it annually by holding events including bestowing awards on prominent members of the Indian diaspora.
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What is Diaspora?

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- Diaspora is a word that brackets people of Indian origin who have emigrated since the 19th century to all corners of the world.
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How can the diaspora be categorised?

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- It falls into two categories: pre- and post-Independence.
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- In post independence diaspora group can be further subdivided into migration to the West, including Australia and New Zealand, and workers in the West Asian countries who began flocking there following oil cartelisation by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries after the Arab-Israel war of 1973 and the steep rise in oil prices
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What is the imporatance of Indian diaspora to India?

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- The Indian diaspora’s remittances in the past have been of vital assistance to Indian foreign exchange reserves.
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- **But the challenge now is to go to the next stage — of harnessing not just their financial but also their intellectual capital.**
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What is the situation of Indian diaspora in West Asia?

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- The increasing earnings allowed the hereditary rulers of West Asia to unleash a spending and construction boom.
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- Despite cycles of economic expansion and contraction, as oil prices rose or fell, the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have learnt to live with the perils of single commodity dependent economies.
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- Such as Dubai, with almost depleted oil reserves, have remodelled themselves as entrepot for regional trade and a destination for tourism, besides emerging as a financial centre.
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- Both Abu Dhabi and Qatar are modelling themselves as centres of culture and sports, civil aviation hubs and more spartan living.

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What are the challenges the Indian diaspora in West Asia face?

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They face two new challenges:

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1. **the shale oil revolution in the United States** combined with slower global growth and environmental concerns may have already pushed the world into a post-OPEC phase and perennial low oil prices.
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2. the entire region to the west of India up to the Mediterranean is now swept by Shia-Sunni competition and the challenge posed by **radical Islam.** Thus instability may persist for decades.
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- The Indians in GCC countries, ranging from skilled and unskilled workers to those holding executive jobs or running businesses, may have to face more challenging circumstances of economic slowdown, **"Arabisation" or more jobs to locals,** and threats from terror-related events.
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- Indian workers, particularly the vast majority from Kerala, are still the favoured ones of the locals but are under pressure from more skilled workers from countries such as the Philippines or cheaper labour from Nepal, etc.
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- In India, the Union and State governments have failed to upgrade skills of Indian workers going to West Asia.
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- As a rising power, India's prestige suffers when its citizens are seen doing menial jobs.
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- For decades India has let its citizens be subjected to local labour rules that are medieval and regressive, such as employer seizing the travel documents of the worker on arrival.
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What was the role of Indian diaspora in the past?

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- India diaspora that left India as indentured labour in the 19th century — in the period from 1833 to 1917 — particularly for the Caribbean where labour shortages ensued following the abolition of slavery.
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- The expulsion of Indians from Uganda by Idi Amin in the 1970s tested Indian diplomacy and its ability to protect the diaspora. India passed the buck to Britain as the guarantor of their safety as most held British documents.
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- Mauritius, with Indians constituting the largest group and 48.5 per cent of the population being Hindus, has seen the community consolidate political power, with strategic support from Indian governments.
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- Contrary wise, India was unable to support 49 per cent of Indo-Fijians in their desire for a multi-ethnic government when, in 1987, Lt. Col. S. Rabuka overthrew the elected government. Their numbers have shrunk since then.
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- Persons of Indian origin have headed governments in some Caribbean countries such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, the two nations with huge Indo-Caribbean populations.
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- **Indian policy in the past has been to not be seen as meddling in their internal affairs sensing that it may be counterproductive.**
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- India has been build on the base by boosting investment and business links and better connectivity.
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What is the role of Indian diaspora in west?

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- The issue of diaspora in the U.S., the United Kingdom and Canada, with rising numbers and greater earnings, they are becoming more proactive to rally in support of Indian interests.
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- Their lobbying in the U.S. with politicians worked famously to swing the Congressional vote for the U.S.-Indian nuclear deal in 2006.
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- While the U.S. leads as the country with the highest number of Indian origin persons numbering around four million, the U.K. and Canada are next with

1.45 million and 1.2 million, respectively.
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Is their nationalistic division among the diaspora people?

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- The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has been active in spreading its message of Hindutva in all of them.
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- During NDA-I, the Vajpayee government even unprecedentedly appointed a special ambassador in the U.S. for diaspora affairs, raising protocol issues with the U.S. State Department as no country will accept two ambassadors. Thus he had to be located in New York with notional attachment to the Indian mission to the UN.
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- Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Madison Square Garden show took the same to another level. There was a blurring between the loyalties that Indian origin persons holding U.S. nationality owe to their adopted nation and their innate love for India.
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- The danger with this kind of public and Hindutva-fed ritual is that it may create a majority community backlash and divide the diaspora.
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- For instance, Sikhs are the largest component of the diaspora in Canada, at 34 per cent compared to 27 per cent Hindus, with the rest being Muslims and Christians.
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What is the estimate of Indian diaspora living abroad?

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- The Wall Street Journal estimates that there are **15.6 million persons born in India living abroad.** This number has grown by 17.2 per cent since 2010.
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What is the estimate of Chinese diaspora satying abroad?

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- The Chinese diaspora is 50 million strong, with 32 million settled in Southeast Asia.
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- For China, this community became the bridge to integrate their economy to global supply chains once Deng Xiaoping opened Chinese doors in the 1980s. They also funded investment in Chinese economic zones.
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Source: The Hindu

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