

Overseas Indians are valued economic partners

Few countries can lay claim to the vast reservoir of talent and expertise of an overseas community such as India enjoys. Successive rounds of emigration have resulted in some 30 million people of Indian origin based in almost all countries of the world. Today, as the country progresses towards a new era of prosperity, it can draw upon this community for ideas and investments. On the other hand, participation in its vibrant growth story benefits overseas Indians so that a mutually reinforcing partnership of both sides is built.

Over the last decade, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention has aimed at amplifying the bilateral relationship, offering overseas Indians opportunities to contribute to the land of their ancestors. The Confederation of Indian Industry, which has substantial links overseas, has helped create multiple synergies be-

tween the two sides which are leading to a new and growing dynamic partnership for economic prosperity.

Representing one of the most successful, educated and prosperous emigrant communities, Overseas Indians play multidimensional roles in the Indian economy, directly and indirectly. For Indian industry, the community has been a stellar partner in its overseas endeavours, often its first port of call in a new geography. The capability of overseas Indians to operate in diverse cultures helps it to act as a bridge of understanding between Indian companies and local businesses. The presence of a growing number of Indian companies overseas has led to a new tribe of overseas Indians that represents the best of Indian industry, acting as economic ambassadors.

Similarly, India operations of large multinationals are often led



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by overseas Indians who act on their desire to connect with their country of origin by expanding their employers' businesses in India. They can leverage their cultural multiplicity and languages for optimal benefits to both sides.

Apart from this, India has received the highest remittances of any country for the last several years, which at around \$50 billion has helped stabilise its foreign exchange position. These remit-

tances are spent on family expenditures and financial investments, shoring up local economies in states such as Kerala, Punjab and many others. In the development sphere, people of Indian origin have been active in education and health as well as infrastructure in their ancestral villages. Organisations such as the British and American associations of physicians have set up large health programs with targeted interventions in particular diseases and public health.

One area in which overseas Indians could be more active is investments. The experience of China, whose economic resurgence was led by the Chinese of Hong Kong, USA and other centers, has shown that the overseas community can be critical in funding investments for new ventures. According to estimates, only about 5% of FDI in India originates from people of Indian origin.

The Government has facilitated investments from overseas Indians through various policies and the Overseas Indian Facilitation Center assists in generating awareness and disseminating investment information for the overseas Indian community. A number of India funds have been set up by foreign private equity investors as well. However, overseas Indians still face issues of distance, lack of information on investment opportunities, absence of credible partners, and others, which deter them from investing in projects and business ventures directly. A growing Indian economy presents opportunities across the board from infrastructure and manufacturing to services and knowledge industries. Overseas Indians must take advantage of their unique capabilities to expand their presence in the country. Organisations such as CII can help in this.