

Standing Committee Report Summary

Welfare of Indian Diaspora and Status of Emigration Bill

- The Standing Committee on External Affairs (Chair: Dr. Shashi Tharoor) presented its report on ‘Indian Diaspora Overseas: All Aspects of their Conditions and Welfare, including the Status of the Emigration Bill’ on April 1, 2025. Indian diaspora refers to people whose origins can be traced to India or are Indian citizens who have settled abroad. This includes Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Policy for diaspora:** The Committee observed that there is no single clear policy document for the diaspora. It further noted that the lack of a clear policy impacts the country’s ability to adequately address the issues of the diaspora. The Committee recommended that the Ministry draft a policy document which would serve as a guiding principle for deeper engagement with the community.
 - **Centralised database of Indian diaspora:** As of January 2024, there were about 35 million Indian migrants. As per UN estimates, in 2020, there were around 18 million Indian migrants. The Committee noted that this figure must have increased more than the Ministry’s reported numbers. It observed that there is no authentic data on the Indian diaspora. The Committee recommended the Ministry to devise mechanisms to collect data on migrants and returnees on real time basis. It also recommended setting up a national migration database.
 - **Remittances from NRIs:** The Committee observed that inward remittances from NRIs are the second largest source of external financing after service exports. In 2023-24, remittances from NRIs were around USD 119 billion. The Committee recommended: (i) streamlining online transfer platforms, (ii) reducing transaction fees, (iii) addressing taxation concerns, and (iv) promoting other investment options available to NRIs in India, such as mutual funds, stocks, and real estate.
 - **Grievance redressal of diaspora:** The Committee observed that multiple contact points and the lack of standardised operating procedures hinder timely redressal of grievances of migrants. It recommended that Indian Embassies should maintain a publicly accessible database for tracking complaints with contact details of nodal officers.
 - **Transfer of sentenced prisoners:** India has signed 31 bilateral agreements on transfer of sentenced persons. Under these agreements, Indian prisoners in foreign countries can be transferred to India to serve the remainder of their sentence, and vice-versa. Most countries in Europe, North America, and South America are covered by such bilateral and multilateral agreements. The Committee observed that countries in Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe are yet to be covered. Despite such agreements, only eight Indian prisoners were transferred from foreign countries in the last three years. Presently, 10,152 Indian prisoners are lodged in foreign prisons. The Committee recommended the Ministry to: (i) pursue agreements with the remaining countries, (ii) amend existing agreements or create new ones for repatriation of prisoners, and (iii) ensure that the rights of Indian prisoners are protected.
- **Recruitment malpractices:** Recruitment agents must register with the Protector General of Emigrants before recruiting Indian workers for overseas employment. As of October 2024, 3,094 unregistered agents were notified. The Committee observed that existing penalties and fines are insufficient for recruitment malpractices. It recommended effectively criminalising such practices.
- **Reintegration of deportees and returned migrants:** The Committee observed that state governments are responsible for the reintegration of returned Indian deportees. It also noted the absence of a national policy on reintegration of migrant returnees. The Committee recommended the Centre to implement reintegration programmes for returned deportees. It also recommended framing a reintegration policy for returned migrants with shared responsibilities between Centre and states.
- **Emigration Bill:** The Committee observed delays in finalising the Emigration [Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2024]. The proposed Bill seeks to establish a comprehensive emigration management framework. The Committee recommended prioritising the Bill and setting timelines for presenting it in Parliament.
- **Student migrants:** As of January 2024, around 17.8 lakh Indian students are studying in educational institutions abroad. The Committee observed that from 2018 to February 2024, 403 deaths of Indian students abroad have been reported due to various reasons. The Committee also noted that student migration is not presently covered under the proposed Emigration Bill. It recommended: (i) creating a safety net for Indian students abroad, and (ii) addressing their concerns in the new Emigration Bill.

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