

Standing Committee Report Summary

Welfare of Indian Diaspora: Policies and Schemes

- The Standing Committee on External Affairs (Chair: Mr. P.P. Chaudhary) presented its report on ‘Welfare of Indian Diaspora: Policies/Schemes’ on August 3, 2022. Indian diaspora refers to people whose origins can be traced to India or are Indian citizens living abroad. This includes Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI). Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Policy for diaspora:** The Ministry of External Affairs engages with the diaspora through various programmes and schemes. The Committee observed that no clear policy on diaspora is in place, despite their socio-economic contributions to the development of the country. The Committee recommended that the Ministry draft a clear policy document on the diaspora which would serve as a guiding principle for engagement with the community.
 - **Database on Indian diaspora:** The Committee observed that the Ministry of External Affairs does not have updated data on Indian diaspora, as registration with Indian Embassies is voluntary. In the absence of such a database, welfare schemes may not be implemented properly. The Committee recommended that Indian Embassies encourage the diaspora to register themselves, which would allow the Ministry to effectively implement welfare schemes.
 - **Emigration Management Bill:** The Committee observed that the Emigration Management Bill, 2022 has been under consultation and vetting for a long time. It seeks to establish an emigration framework, liberalise clearances, and strengthen welfare for overseas migrants. The Committee recommended that the Ministry introduce the Bill at the earliest.
 - **Multiple portals for grievance redressal:** Several portals such as e-Migrate, and the Centralised Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) are in place to resolve the grievances of Indian nationals abroad. The Committee noted that multiple portals may delay grievance resolution and recommended that the Ministry ensure it does not lead to duplication of work. Resolution of grievances in most cases may require a connect at the local level. The Committee noted that the CPGRAMS portal is the quickest way to interact with state governments or the district police, but it is not popular overseas. It recommended that the Ministry publicise the portal so it can be used to resolve grievances effectively.
- **Rehabilitation of workers:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, many workers including Gulf returnees lost their jobs. As the pandemic eased, few workers have returned to their places of employment abroad. The Committee noted that a rehabilitation scheme to ensure livelihood security for workers who lost their jobs or were unable to return to their place of employment is required. It recommended that the Ministry draft a comprehensive rehabilitation scheme in coordination with the concerned Ministries, Departments, state governments, and stakeholders.
- **Skilling of potential migrant workers:** The Committee noted that the international labour market has now become demand driven, compared to the earlier supply driven system. With new labour markets emerging in east-Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, the skilling of potential migrant workers is a challenge. The Committee noted that providing skills that match the destination country’s requirements is an important challenge, especially in the post-COVID era. It recommended improving the quality of domestic skilling and standardising curricula across the country to ensure that migrant workers are able to go abroad and secure employment with better wages.
- **Students in Ukraine and China:** Several Indian medical students studying in Ukraine and China were unable to resume their courses physically or complete their internships in India due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Committee recommended that the Ministry ensure that Indian private medical institutions enrol returnee students from Ukraine by granting a one-time exemption. With respect to Indian students enrolled in medical colleges in China, the Committee recommended allowing them to complete the remaining part of their internship in India.
- **NRI Marriages:** The Committee observed increasing cases of women being deserted in NRI marriages. The Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019 was examined by the Committee and a report was presented in March, 2020. The Committee recommended that the Ministry complete its consultation and enact a law for the benefit of NRI women.
- **One Stop Centres:** The Committee observed that the Ministry had decided to establish overseas centres to help distressed NRI women. It recommended that the scheme be launched without delay.

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