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# 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2026 — India's Diaspora at Bhubaneswar

9 January 2026

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# 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2026 — India's Diaspora at Bhubaneswar

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## WHY IN NEWS

The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention 2026 was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha from January 8–10, 2026 — the first time the event was hosted in Odisha — with the theme “Diaspora’s Contribution to Viksit Bharat.” Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the three-day convention attended by thousands of overseas Indians.

## WHAT IS PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS?

**Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** — literally “Overseas Indian Day” — is India’s flagship event for engaging with its vast diaspora. The convention is organised by the **Ministry of External Affairs** and brings together Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), and overseas Indian communities from across the world.

**Date significance:** PBD is celebrated on **January 9**, chosen because it was on this date in 1915 that **Mahatma Gandhi** returned to India from South Africa — symbolising the contribution of the diaspora to India’s freedom struggle and national development.

**Historical background:** The first PBD Convention was held in **2003** during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, based on the recommendation of the **High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora** chaired by L.M. Singhvi. It has since become a biennial event (held every two years) since 2015.

## THE 18TH PBD CONVENTION 2026 — KEY DETAILS

Parameter	Details
Edition	18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention
Dates	January 8–10, 2026
Venue	Bhubaneswar, Odisha
First time in Odisha	Yes — a major recognition for Odisha
Theme	“Diaspora’s Contribution to Viksit Bharat”
Inaugurated by	Prime Minister Narendra Modi
Chief Guest	Christine Kangaloo, President, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Presided on Jan 10	President Droupadi Murmu
Hosted by	Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Majhi

**Why Bhubaneswar?** Odisha is home to a significant historical diaspora — particularly in the Caribbean and Southeast Asia where Indian indentured labourers migrated in the 19th century. Trinidad and Tobago, the country of the chief guest, has a large Indo-Trinidadian community of Indian origin. Bhubaneswar’s selection also reflects the government’s recognition of non-metro cities as capable venues for flagship national events.

## INDIA’S DIASPORA — SIZE, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONTRIBUTION

India has the **world’s largest diaspora by absolute numbers** — approximately **3.2 crore (32 million) people** of Indian origin living outside India. This population is spread across six continents.

### Major diaspora hubs:

**Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries:** ~9 million Indians (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman) — primarily migrant workers in construction, services, and healthcare

**United States:** ~4.5 million Indian-Americans — one of the highest-income ethnic groups in the USA; significant representation in technology, medicine, and politics

**United Kingdom:** ~1.8 million persons of Indian origin — a legacy of colonial-era migration

**Malaysia and Singapore:** significant Indian communities from colonial-period plantation labour

**Canada:** ~1.6 million and growing rapidly through skilled worker immigration

**Caribbean and Pacific:** Indo-Trinidadian, Indo-Fijian, Indo-Guyanese communities — descendants of 19th-century indentured labourers

### Economic contribution:

**Remittances to India (2024):** approximately **\$125 billion** — making India the world's largest recipient of remittances for the third consecutive year (World Bank data)

Gulf alone: ~\$40 billion/year in remittances

Remittances constitute approximately 3% of India's GDP

### Cultural and diplomatic contribution:

Indian diaspora serves as **brand ambassadors** and **soft power** instruments

Indo-American community's political visibility in the US — Vice President Kamala Harris (of Indian descent), several governors and legislators — represents a new phase of diaspora influence

Silicon Valley's Indian-origin technology leaders (Google's Sundar Pichai, Microsoft's Satya Nadella, IBM's Arvind Krishna) project India's intellectual capital

## PBD SAMMAN AWARDS

The **PBD Samman Award** is the highest honour conferred by the Government of India on members of the overseas Indian community. Recipients are selected from nominations for their outstanding contribution to:

Welfare of the local Indian community

Enhancement of India's relations with their country of residence

Contributions to India's social, economic, scientific, or cultural development

The awards are presented by the President of India at the concluding session of the PBD Convention.

## POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE DIASPORA

The Ministry of External Affairs manages diaspora engagement through several institutional mechanisms:

### Consular Services:

Indian Missions and Consulates provide registration, passport, and notarial services to overseas Indians

**eMigrate system:** Online platform for registration and clearance of workers going to Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries — primarily Gulf, Southeast Asia

### Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY):

Insurance scheme for Indian workers going to ECR countries (low-skilled migrant workers who need Emigration Clearance)

Covers accidental death, permanent disability, repatriation

**OCI Card (Overseas Citizen of India):**

Not dual citizenship but a lifelong multiple-entry visa to India

Allows unlimited stay, work rights, no need for residential permits

OCI holders treated on par with NRIs for most purposes except political rights and agricultural land purchase

**Know India Programme (KIP):**

For young diaspora members (18–30 years) to experience Indian culture, heritage, and governance

Funded by MEA; 21-day programme

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**Prelims:**

PBD: 18th edition; January 8–10, 2026; Bhubaneswar, Odisha; Theme: Diaspora's Contribution to Viksit Bharat

Date significance: January 9 — Gandhi's return from South Africa (1915)

First PBD: 2003 (Vajpayee government); biennial since 2015

India diaspora: ~3.2 crore; world's largest by numbers

India remittances 2024: ~\$125 billion (world's largest recipient)

PBD Samman Award: highest honour for overseas Indians; presented by President

Chief Guest 2026: Christine Kangaloo, President, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Mains GS-2:** India's diaspora policy — soft power, remittances as economic contribution, consular services framework, OCI card significance; India's approach to diaspora vs. Chinese overseas diaspora; Indo-Caribbean community historical roots (indentured labour 19th century).

**★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA**
**18TH PBD CONVENTION 2026:**

Dates: January 8–10, 2026; Venue: Bhubaneswar, Odisha (first time in Odisha)

Theme: “Diaspora’s Contribution to Viksit Bharat”

Chief Guest: Christine Kangaloo (President, Trinidad and Tobago)

Inaugurated: PM Narendra Modi; Presided on Jan 10: President Droupadi Murmu

Ministry: External Affairs; Organised since 2003 (1st PBD); biennial since 2015

**INDIA DIASPORA DATA:**

Total overseas Indians: ~3.2 crore (world’s largest diaspora)

Gulf alone: ~9 million; USA: ~4.5 million; UK: ~1.8 million; Canada: ~1.6 million

Remittances 2024: ~\$125 billion (world’s largest recipient; ~3% of GDP)

Gulf remittances alone: ~\$40 billion/year

**PBD DATE SIGNIFICANCE:**

January 9: Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa (1915)

**KEY DIASPORA SCHEMES:**

OCI Card: lifelong multiple-entry visa; work rights; not dual citizenship

PBBY: Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana; insurance for ECR country workers

eMigrate: online platform for emigration clearance

Know India Programme (KIP): 21-day programme for diaspora youth (18–30 years)

**PBD SAMMAN AWARD:**

Highest honour for overseas Indians; presented by President of India at PBD convention

Criteria: contribution to diaspora welfare, India’s bilateral relations, social/economic/cultural development

**OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

Indo-Trinidadian community: descendants of Indian indentured labourers (19th century; under British colonial rule)

Indian-Americans in politics: Kamala Harris (VP), Usha Vance (Second Lady), multiple governors/legislators

Indian-origin tech leaders: Sundar Pichai (Google), Satya Nadella (Microsoft), Arvind Krishna (IBM)

World Bank Global Remittances data 2024: India #1; Mexico #2; China #3; Philippines #4

Sources: Ministry of External Affairs, PIB

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