



Address by Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.) Minister of State for External Affairs at the Inaugural Session of Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on Role of Diaspora Youth in the Transformation of India

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**His Excellency Michael Ashwin Adhin, Vice President of Suriname,
Shri Siddaramaiahji, Chief Minister of Karnataka,
Shri Vijay Goel ji, Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports,
My young friends and delegates attending the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention,
Young overseas Indians from four Know India Programmes,
Students from the National Service Scheme,
Students from colleges and universities in Bengaluru area,**
It is a pleasure to be here today at the inaugural session of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

At the outset, I extend to all of you warm and heartfelt wishes for happiness, peace and prosperity to all in this New Year 2017.

A long time ago, your elders embarked on an arduous journey, uprooting themselves from familiar surroundings, to seek their dreams. Armed only with their belief in their abilities, they transformed the world around them against all odds and constructed realities from dreams.

The common thread, the indestructible filament that binds all of you together is the enduring connect with a country whose history dates back to five millennia, whose contemporary reality takes you on an incredible journey and whose future offers you endless possibilities. We consider you as one of our own and we offer you the best of what we have.

Whether you are looking for adventure tourism, or affordable quality education, or tech start-ups or even a market for novel utility products, India offers limitless opportunities. For example, Bengaluru alone is home to many educational and research institutions such. It is also home to several active tech startups. Similar facilities and opportunities exist in towns and cities across the country.

To familiarize the Diaspora youth with the limitless opportunity and potential that is India, and to harness their imagination and creativity, we have several programmes in place.

The Know India Programme, through which many of you are visiting India presently, is one such scheme aimed to give you a flavour of India and provide a platform for interaction with policy makers; industry and civil society. We hope that the KIP alumni will remain in touch with one another as well as with us, including through new networking platforms.

The Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children enables Diaspora youth to pursue Undergraduate courses in Indian Universities and Institutes. This programme has recently been revamped and extended from 44 to 66 countries; and the number of scholarships has also been increased. A portal has been set up to enable online application and processing.

Bharat Ko Janiye (Know India) Quiz programme which Prime Minister launched for young overseas Indians in the last PBD in 2015 in Gandhinagar was another initiative which received tremendous response. The winners received medals from PM during the inauguration of Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra on Gandhiji's birthday, October 2 this year.

The Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas which we launched in 2015 was yet another reflection of our conviction in the power of the youth Diaspora to bring in change. The 2015 Youth PBD was about **3Cs, Connect-** to connect the Indian Diasporas to their motherland; **Celebrate-** to celebrate the pride in the history and civilization heritage of India and; **Contribute-** participation in transforming India.

I would like to mention in this Youth PBD 2017, about **4 Ts** through which you can transform your lives as well as that of India. These are:

- Talent
- Technology
- Training
- Teamwork

The first T: Talent

By 2020, the average age in India will be 29 making it the world's youngest country with 64% of the population in the working age group. The Prime Minister's vision will make India the skill capital of the world by 2022. Whatever your chosen field of endeavour, you will encounter many Indians in your peer group. If you have the relevant talent, relevant skill-set and are willing to partner with us, there is a world of opportunity for you. Cross-fertilization of ideas can also bring rich rewards to your host country.

Sharpening of talents or skills requires infrastructure that we can build together as partners. Skilling is not a zero-sum-game. An increase in competence levels and range of skills in India would contribute to greater employment opportunities both within India and elsewhere, thanks to linkage and multiplier effects.

The skilling eco-system should also lead to innovation and techno-entrepreneurship which, directly or indirectly, result in social good. I am happy to note that the Youth PBD 2017 has a plenary session on Start-ups and Innovation which have a social impact in India.

The second T: Technology

Indian achievements in the field of Science and Technology need no reiteration: From super computer to indigenous space programme; Mars Mission to Chandrayaan; Antarctic mission to oceanographic research, there are several stellar examples. We have always believed in Technology with a human face.

Knowledge-based economies know no boundaries. Today, the world is already a digital village. With technology, we can transform lives at the touch of a button.

From the use of networking platforms to stay connected; or social media to disseminate information; creation of technology partnerships, there are a zillion ways in which you can transform lives through technology.

The third T: Training

In an age of rapid technological transformation, learning is not a one-time process with a fixed beginning and end, but a continuous flow of constantly learning, unlearning and relearning.

We consider this as a two-way process. Knowledge multiplies when shared. We are ready to offer training and education to you in areas where we are good at and similarly, we will be happy to take you up on your offers of expertise in your areas of interest. Training could also take the shape of internships; volunteering or even philanthropy. The choice is yours.

Living far from home as students is challenging. We must make it easier for students to focus on excellence- whether they are Indian students abroad, or NRI students or other foreign students in India. To help us understand the related issues and possible solutions, the Youth PBD 2017 includes plenary sessions on issues faced by Indian students abroad and NRI and PIO students in India. We have recently launched a platform for online registration of Indian students abroad – it is voluntary and will help us estimate the number of such students, map them and also reach out to them in a more effective manner.

At the Youth PBD you will also have an opportunity to meet and interact with the young students who have come here from all over India and especially from colleges and universities in Bengaluru.

And finally, T: Teamwork

Global good cannot be achieved by any single country alone. Also, the challenges that we face in the world today are too complicated to be addressed by any single country. We need to realize this and stand together. We need to strengthen the bridges that connect us and create new ones.

We have launched a number of flagship programmes to achieve our developmental objectives. Our dream is of a prosperous, skilful, enterprising, clean and futuristic India. The Smart Cities Mission; the Digital India; the Skill India; the Start Up India; the Swacch Bharat Campaign are all part of our efforts to realize that dream. We also look at our friends and partner countries to realize that dream. Our challenges also offer opportunities for you to be part of India's growth story through which you will also realize your dreams.

I could give several reasons why India has an exciting story to offer, but the most compelling is what you see around you for yourself. Take the time to visit the Exhibition at the PBD convention which showcases the flagship programmes, state governments' initiatives; and Indian craft and cultural bazaar. I am sure you will also enjoy the cultural performances in the evening. I invite you to also participate in the PBD convention tomorrow and hear the Prime Minister's vision for the Diaspora and this nation, and the Chief Ministers of eight states who will address the overseas Indian community.

We have amongst us today, the young Vice-President of Suriname, H.E Mr. Michael Ashwin Adhin. His presence and participation at the PBD is I am an inspiration to Diaspora youth especially those from the girmitya countries.

Before I conclude, let me take this opportunity, on behalf of Ministry of External Affairs, to place my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Government of Karnataka for their support in making this event possible.

Thank You.
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