

Diaspora Relations and Organisational Structure



he strengths and diversities of the Indian Diaspora have been discussed under various categories throughout this report. The High Level Committee met and held free, in-depth discussions with a number of associations and eminent members of the Diaspora from all over the world ranging from those in the economic superpower of the century to those in the countries that have just fledgling economies. A common, repeated and earnest refrain of all shades of the Indian diaspora is the pressing need to save them from the labyrinth of Indian rules and procedures and put in place a mechanism that obviates the requirement of referrals to a multiplicity of organisations and departments whenever NRIs and PIOs look to India for interaction. The need to traverse this maze is the single biggest negative factor in the Diaspora's consideration.

- 37.2. This request was repeated so often that the Committee has given considerable study and thought to the matter. The Committee noted that other successful Diasporas all have well-funded, well-staffed organisations for interacting with their own homelands. It is the considered view of the Committee that the single most important requirement is to institute a single-window contact mechanism to deal with the NRIs/PIOs and to meet their needs. To give an illustrative list, these needs range from information on Government Of India's rules and policies, referrals to states and private enterprises, guidance in determining locations and conditions for a specific type of industry, or organizing introductions between the Diaspora members and Indian industry. By its very mandate this organisation will need to be very flexible in approach and adaptable in functioning. It will have to be well-funded, well-staffed with people who have had interaction with public dealing specially with the Diaspora, possess the latest modern means of communications and function as an autonomous empowered body so as not to be hamstrung by some of our inflexible regulations. This organisation will be, *inter alia*, responsible for maintaining a central database on NRIs/PIOs and a web portal communication system to ensure rapid, world-class communication.
- 37.3. While arriving at this recommendation, the Committee examined India's past efforts at engaging with its Diaspora. The Committee feels that it would be useful to take a leaf out of our own past experience at interacting with the Diaspora and avoid the pitfalls, which prevented those efforts from fully meeting the Diaspora's needs.

- 37.4. The Committee notes that there are two existing Indian missions, London and Washington, which have officers of the rank of Minister to look after Diaspora and community matters. The very rationale for establishing posts in these Indian missions with the specific charge of liaising with the Diaspora is to allow for constant interaction and exchange of ideas between the Head of Mission and the local Indian community. It is, however, possible to think of various mechanisms to liaise with the Diaspora.
- 37.5. On the side of the Diaspora there is often fractiousness among Indians. In this situation, encouraging the setting up of advisory councils amongst them, to interact with the Indian mission representing the spectrum of opinions of the local Diaspora is perhaps the best solution. The collegiate functioning of advisory councils would be more cohesive and less divisive. Such local advisory councils should have flexible memberships to include participation of all possible shades and varieties of interests and opinions in the Diaspora.
- 37.6. On the government's part, one possible route is the appointment of an Ambassador of Indian Diaspora. It has been represented to us that posting any such representative in any one of the countries is invidious and appears to confine the contact with Diaspora in that country alone. It also been represented to us that it tends to undermine the effectiveness and the authority of the Indian Ambassador or High Commissioner in that country.
- 37.7. The Committee elicited the views of a large number of eminent persons both from India and from the Diaspora. In this context a former Foreign Secretary Shri J.N. Dixit, is of the view that "Persons ... who have personal access to the prime minister and the cabinet diminish the authority, credibility and influence of the regular Indian ambassador...Chanakya said two thousand years ago that one kingdom cannot be ruled by two kings; two swords cannot be sheathed in one scabbard. Neither can two ambassadors represent our republic in one country."
- 37.8. Another former Foreign Secretary, Shri S.K. Singh, has also made the same point by quoting Ambassador Charles W. Freeland to great effect. "In republics which do not confer titles of nobility, the title of ambassador comes closest to such an honour. Many who should justly be recognized for notable achievement in fields unrelated to diplomacy, therefore, seek ambassadorships".
- 37.9. "As they are without experience to prepare them for the multiple duties of the office, such men are only seldom able to discharge it with full dignity. The appointment of such men, therefore, risks damage both to their own previously distinguished reputations and to those of the states and governments they represent."
- 37.10. In this context it has been represented to us by all shades of the Diaspora that local problems are best dealt with in that country and using tried and tested routes. There are two arms of India, which together embrace the Diaspora- one is each Mission and the other is the India-based mechanism, which is viable, vibrant, functional and effective.

India's Experience: India Investment Centre and Chief Commissioner NRIs

- 37.11. The Committee looked into the reasons for the non-viability of the India Investment Centre (IIC). IIC is a registered body set up in 1960 as an investment promotion agency. It had its own recruitment policy and procedures. In 1991, a Cabinet decision merged both top posts in the IIC, that of Chairman and Executive Director and redesignated it as a single post of Chief Commissioner (Non Resident Indians) and Chairman (IIC). By 1992, a Cabinet decision to close all its 11 field offices in India and abroad was taken but held in abeyance. Later it was decided to reverse the decision for want of an alternative satisfactory mechanism. Subsequently it was considered that Government would restructure and strengthen IIC, but no final decision was reached. As a consequence, the IIC office continued its functioning.
- 37.12. Subsequently in 1999, the activities of the post of the Chief Commissioner (NRI) were brought under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of External Affairs. This was, however, never effectively operationalised since the officer in his primary role as Chairman (IICO) continued to be under the control of Ministry of Finance and the entire staff of the organisation was equipped only to deal with investment related issues.

The staff of the IIC lacked the exposure to NRIs and a feel for their needs. The setup was basically investment-centric and did not cater to the entire range of expectations of the Diaspora. In addition the IIC was a promotional body and not an empowered one and was ineffective in interactions with the states and other organisations. IIC, therefore, fell far short of meeting the aspirations of the Diaspora.

- 37.13. The Indian Overseas Cell had been created in Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in November 1977 as a part of the PP Division in response to a reply given by the then Foreign Minister in Rajya Sabha. It was created to study the problems of PIOs. Later this cell was made a part of the Coordination Division. The Overseas Indians Division was set up in January 1984 in the Special Coordination Division, under the charge of Joint Secretary (Coordination). Later it was transferred to Joint Secretary (Policy Planning) in 1985. Subsequently a separate Joint Secretary (Overseas Indians) was placed in charge of the division. In June 1992, Overseas Indians Division was merged with Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) division of the MEA. The Committee observed that there was no consistent policy or clarity in the Government of India about the high priority need to interact with the Diaspora through a continuous, single window contact.
- 37.14. On 24 April 2000, the NRI/PIO Division was created under MEA and placed under the charge of an Additional Secretary who was also in charge of CPV division and the Special Kuwait Cell. Currently an officer of the level of Secretary to Government of India looks after the work of this division. This division has served as the secretariat of the High Level Committee. The Committee feels that the present arrangements under the MEA, although a vast improvement on the past situation, still fall short of the expectations of the Diaspora. The division in MEA is not funded or

staffed to the extent necessary in order to fully meet the needs of the Diaspora. Further it is not an empowered body to be able to sustain a meaningful interaction between India and its Diaspora.

- 37.15. The Committee noted that the expectations of the Diaspora are very diverse and wide-ranging. They range from trade, investment, to educational or technological, cultural and even personal issues. These include requests for liaison with the police, local district administrations, PWDs, SEBs, investment promotion bureaus, education and welfare departments, schools, local treasury and bank units, and many more.
- 37.16. The Committee observed that there is no concept of a multidisciplinary ministry in our system. The Committee, therefore, felt that there is a pressing need to prioritise this issue and give it a dedicated setup of its own. The State governments also need to work in close cooperation and conjunction with the Central organisation. Each State needs to put in place a single-window, dedicated organisation to liaise with the central setup. In this context, the Committee also examined the present mechanisms extant in the various States.

Set-up in the States

- 37.17. Following the economic liberalisation programme launched under the 1991 reforms, many State Governments have created offices to deal with FDI/PIO. Most of these offices focus on attracting NRI investments. In some cases, the office dealing with investment also deals with NRI/PIO matters as well as other categories of investors.
- 37.18. The Committee was happy to note that there is an increasing awareness of PIO expectations in the State governments. It, however, also observed that current offices of the State governments are limited in scope and nature of functioning. Many have chosen to focus on only a few aspects of special interest to their State. They are manned by personnel who do not have specialized training in public relations or in interaction with the NRIs. Nor are they equipped to cater to the entire gamut of the multidimensional needs of Diaspora. An illustrative list of the observations of the Committee follows.
- i. One innovation reported was that some Offices of Resident Commissioners in Delhi had been authorised to act as a facilitation point for liaison with the districts in order to expedite investment and other matters. The Committee felt that this was an encouraging first step in the right direction.
 - ii. The UP Government has initiated a “Discover your roots” scheme, designed for descendants of labourers who left India decades ago. This focuses on the Tourism aspect.
 - iii. The Punjab Government and NGO NRI Sabha, cooperate towards the same objectives.
 - iv. The Haryana Government has announced reservation of 5% seats and reduced tuition fees for NRIs in its technical and professional institutes.

- v. Kerala, Punjab and Gujarat have created institutional structures for dealing with NRI/PIO problems dealt with in detail below.
- vi. Andhra Pradesh is leveraging this asset through innovative schemes.
- vii. Madhya Pradesh has created a website which has a number of projects for NRIs to fund.

37.19. The Committee looked in-depth at the functioning of some of the more active state setups.

Kerala

37.20. Kerala is very active in servicing the requirements of its 2.5 million strong non-resident population. The Government of Kerala set up the Non Resident Keralites Affairs Department called **NORKA**. Its objectives are to:

- Address complaints on illegal overseas recruitment agencies, non-receipt of salary, accommodation and of NRK housemaids and other women in distress.
- Address problems faced by the Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs) in interacting with the State Government Departments.
- Process enquiries on investment opportunities in Kerala.
- Process enquiries on *Pravasi Suraksha Kudumba Arogya* Scheme.
- Provide assistance to stranded Keralites and in bringing the mortal remains of NRKs to Kerala.

37.21. NORKA has provided assistance to the about 5000 NRKs deported from the UAE. NORKA also assisted 2000 NRKs repatriated from Saudi Arabia to reach home in cooperation with the Malayalee Associations in Mumbai and the Indian Railways. It constituted an emergency repatriation fund for the repatriation of stranded Keralites abroad and for the transportation of mortal remains of NRKs.

37.22. NORKA has launched an Insurance Scheme named **Pravasi Suraksha**, the first scheme of its kind in India, for the unemployed returnees, unskilled labourers and ill-treated housemaids.

37.23. The association has formed committees to check illegal recruitment. A new agency the Non-Resident Keralites' Welfare Agency (**NORKWA**) has been formed to expedite the above.

37.24. The Non Resident Keralites' (NRK) Affairs Department has constituted an NRK Infrastructure Initiative Fund to facilitate NRK investment in Infrastructure Development Projects.

Punjab

37.25. The Punjab Government has adopted an innovative approach to deal with PIOs. The Chief Minister Punjab is the patron of the non-political, non-Governmental (democratically elected) and highly

professional organisation called the NRI Sabha. The Commissioner for NRIs (the term includes PIOs), in Jalandhar is its Chairperson and derives support from the organisation. Nodal officers in each government department looking after NRI matters report to the NRI Commissioner. An outstanding example of NGO-Government collaboration is the investment of Rs. 40 lakhs in Kharodhi village, completely transforming its physical infrastructure.

37.26. The Sabha looks after the interests and welfare of the Diaspora and also honours those NRIs/PIOs who have excelled in their professions abroad. Its objectives are as follows:

- Provide assistance to NRIs/PIOs visiting Punjab and protecting their rights in Punjab especially in property related matters.
- Pursue their interests with the State and Central Government.
- Facilitate NRI/PIO investment in Punjab for economic development.
- Maintain cultural and ethnic bonds with PIOs especially with the new generation.
- Provide a forum for NRI/PIOs, their friends and relatives living in Punjab and the Government to meet and act together.

37.27. It has already some achievements to its credit. As a result of the NRI Sabha's lobbying efforts,

- The Punjab Government has amended the Security of Land Tenures Act in favour of PIOs as taken up by the Sabha.
- On the advice of the Sabha, the Punjab Government has amended the Punjab Rent Restriction Act to enable PIOs to have their residential and non-residential building vacated from tenants.
- The Sabha is actively pursuing a case for amendment in FEMA so that NRIs/PIOs can acquire agricultural land.
- The Sabha has dealt with over 4000 grievances, mostly property related, of Punjabi PIOs.
- To reach the grassroots level, the Sabha has opened 30 *Vasi Parvasi Kendras* in the villages where Kendras will assist NRIs, and also channel NRI funding for development.
- A comprehensive PIO investment policy submitted by the NRI Sabha is under active consideration of the Punjab Government.
- A special NRI cell in the Punjab CM's Secretariat and NRI help line in the offices of Deputy Commissioners and SSPs have been established.
- The Sabha has launched a programme to invite NRI Youths in the age group of 14 to 17 years for guided tours of Punjab, Delhi and Agra to maintain their cultural and ethnic bonds with Punjab/India. A delegation of 20 youths from Derby (U.K.) has just concluded a highly successful and inspiring visit to India.
- Punjab University on the Sabha's recommendation has started a 6- weeks course for NRIs.

- The Sabha arranged 80 computers from Derby for distribution in the schools of Kapurthala District. But it faced problems in obtaining clearances from the central government agencies.
- NRI Sabha Punjab has established “*Punjab Gaurav Sanman*” award. The same was conferred upon Mr. Ujjal Dosanjh, the then Premier of British Columbia and world-renowned Micro-Neuro-Surgeon Dr. Kanwaljit Singh Pal from America during the 5th Annual convention organised by the NRI Sabha Punjab at Dosanjh Kalan.
- The Sabha provides services through email (nrisabha@jla.vsnl.in) to the NRIs and maintains a website www.nrisabhapunjab.com.
- The Sabha issues the **Parvasi View**, which informs on policies and programmes, laws, investment, education, culture etc. related to NRIs. The Sabha also promotes publication of works on the Indian Diaspora and Punjabi NRI literature.

Gujarat

- 37.28. Gujarat State has also made noteworthy attempts to leverage the assets of its non-resident population, called Non-Resident Gujaratis (NRGs). It has created the NRI Division in the General Administration Department of the Government of Gujarat, under the supervision of the Chief Minister. There is also a separate Minister for the Non-Resident Indian Division.
- 37.29. The Government has also set up an autonomous NRG (Non-Resident Gujarati) Foundation headed by a non-official called the “**Gujarat Rajya Bin Niwasi Gujarati Pratisthan**”. The NRI Division and NRG Foundation act as a single-window to facilitate the role of NRGs in development and to address their problems.
- 37.30. The NRG Foundation is issuing a **Gujarat Card** to NRGs, regardless of current citizenship at a nominal fee of US\$ 5. Gujarat Card holders would get special attention from Gujarat Government agencies and enjoy benefits like priority reservations in hotels run by the Tourism Development Corporation of Gujarat Ltd. and in Gujarat Road Transport Corporation buses, concessional hotel rates and discounts in selected shops.
- 37.31. The NRG Foundation is signing **Charters of Friendship** with Gujarati Samajs/Associations in various countries like the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, South Africa and Kenya, etc.
- 37.32. The Foundation has also set up an NRG Bhavan in Ahmedabad near the International Airport - to provide residential accommodation with a 24-hour Business Information Centre for Non-Resident Gujaratis.
- 37.33. Based on interactions with the State Governments the Committee notes that despite an increasing awareness of the needs and problems of the NRIs, there is still a great chasm between the expectations of the Diaspora and the *de-facto* situation in the States. It is necessary to bridge this gap in order to fully engage the Diaspora with India.

37.34. The Committee is of the opinion that there is a very pressing need to link the State mechanisms with the proposed, dedicated central mechanism. The Committee is of the considered view that there is a need to suggest another mechanism to fully and efficiently meet the Diaspora's wide-ranging needs.

Foreign Organisational Models

37.35. In order to derive the benefit of all existing organisations, the Committee also examined the methods used to enhance interactions, adopted by some other countries with sizeable diaspora. Some of the countries that were given detailed consideration were Poland, Japan, Philippines, Lebanon, Italy, Greece China and Israel.

37.36. The findings of the Committee in regard to these studies are summarized below.

Poland

37.37. Parliamentary Committees specifically for Diaspora Affairs focus on legislations on policy, financial and budgetary matters. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a Department for Polonia (Polish Diaspora Affairs) headed by a Director, which works under a Deputy Minister. An Inter-Governmental Committee headed by the Deputy Minister in the Foreign Ministry and comprising of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Culture, Finance, Internal Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office serves as the nodal agency. The strong network of NGOs, which are largely financed by the State, supports these activities at the governmental level.

Japan

37.38. Earlier an Overseas Emigration Council' functioned as an advisory body to advise the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister on matters relating to overseas emigration policy. It had 18 members nominated by the Prime Minister from academic and intellectual circles for a term of 2 years. This was transferred to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1984. It has now been abolished. A new body called 'Council on the Movement of People Across Borders' is being established, the details of which are under consideration of the Japanese Government. This organisation will also be an advisory body to advise the Prime Minister and the Minister Of Foreign Affairs.

37.39. In addition there exists an Association of Nikkeis. This association, with the active help and assistance of the Japanese Government, arranges conventions and conferences in Tokyo, of Japanese people living abroad. So far 42 such conventions have been held between 1957 and 2001.

The Philippines

37.40. The Philippines has set up various mechanisms for its workers under the Ministry of Labour & Employment details of which are in the chapter on the Filipino Diaspora. In addition, Migrant

Workers & Overseas Filipinos Resource Centres have been established in countries where there are at least 20,000 migrant workers.

Lebanon

37.41. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates all matters pertaining to fostering close links between Lebanon and its Diaspora, through a separate Department for Diaspora Affairs. The Lebanese Government has also established an independent, non-political organisation called World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) for fostering cultural contacts between Diaspora, especially its youth and the motherland.

Italy

37.42. The Italian Foreign Ministry has a Directorate General for Italians Abroad and Immigration Policies, headed by a Minister of State. The Foreign Ministry in recent reorganisation has also established a Crisis Management Unit to respond to emergency situations involving Italian nationals abroad and provide assistance for their safety. The Italian Government has organised an elaborate framework for regular interaction with the Diaspora, through General Council of Italians Abroad (CGIE). CGIE has a total of 95 personnel of which the Italian Government appoints 29 from important national groups such as the immigration associations, political parties, trade unions, charitable institutions, press etc. The Minister of Foreign Affairs chairs it. A vast network of associations of the Diaspora (COMITE) has also been established in areas with a minimum of 3,000 Italian nationals. Italian Parliament has approved reservation of six seats in the Upper House and 12 seats in the Lower House of Parliament for Italian communities abroad. This directorate has a budget of US \$ 66 million for 2001.

Greece

37.43. Greece has a twofold mechanism.

a) General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad (GSGA)

The General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad (GSGA) was established in 1983 as a part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It functions as an autonomous government entity with its own budget, headed by a Secretary General and acts as a liaison between the Diaspora and Greek government Ministries and other institutions that deal with specific issues affecting the Greek Diaspora. 70 civil servants man it.

b) World Council of Hellenes Abroad:

An organisation called the World Council of Hellenes Abroad was founded in 1995. It is an institutional umbrella representation of all Greek organisations abroad. The Council is a non-partisan, independent consultative body on matters of interest to Greeks abroad, comprised entirely of representatives from Diaspora organisations.

37.44. It is governed by an elected nine-member executive board (world president, alternate world president, four vice presidents and three secretaries to the world president). The four vice presidents

also act as Council's regional presidents in their geographic regions. The GSGA supports the Council in every possible way and serves as the institutional link between the Greek government and SAE.

People's Republic of China

- 37.45. The State, Legislature and Party have high-level offices dealing with the overseas Chinese.
- 37.46. At the Central Government level, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office called SCOCAO, under the State Council of the PRC (the Chinese Cabinet) is the highest executive body. The SCOCAO is headed by a Cabinet Minister and four Vice Ministers and has a staff of 120. Governments at every level, provincial, city, township and county have similar offices handling overseas Chinese affairs. Budgetary information is not available but given the size and nature of the setup it must be considerable.
- 37.47. There is an Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the Chinese Parliament. It functions under the Standing Committee of the Parliament when the latter is not in session.
- 37.48. Overseas Chinese Exchange Association and All China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese are the two NGOs dealing with the Chinese diaspora affairs.

Israel

- 37.49. In Israel, a World Jewish Affairs Division in the Foreign Ministry headed by the Advisor to the Foreign Minister is responsible for maintaining contacts with the Diaspora, through the diplomatic missions abroad and in cooperation with other concerned Ministries. The Division consists of four diplomatic officers in addition to the Head. The Head of the Division represents the Foreign Ministry on the Ministerial Committee for the Diaspora.
- 37.50. There is a separate Ministry of Immigration, which deals with the migration of Jews to Israel.
- 37.51. In the Knesset, a Permanent committee on Immigration, Absorption & Diaspora is the nodal legislative committee dealing with Diaspora Affairs and especially on immigration and absorption of Diaspora. There is no legal or formal policy framework regarding relation between Israel and Diaspora.
- 37.52. The World Jewish Congress, an NGO headquartered in New York is a political umbrella organisation of 80 Jewish communities all over the world, which deals with political concerns, and human rights of the Jewish people by representing their interests with the concerned governments.

South Korea

- 37.53. The main body dealing with the Korean Diaspora is an autonomous organisation called the Overseas Korean Foundation. It was launched in 1997. It has about 50 people, which includes senior officers on deputation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Its annual budget is around US \$ 12.3 million (about Rs. 50 crores).

- 37.54. After reviewing the fortes and foibles of each of these systems and the present setup in India, the Committee came to the conclusion that a blend of ideas from three main options of China, Israel and Greece models along with could be fruitfully utilized in the case of India.
- 37.55. The Committee concluded that given the vast spread and diversity, both ethnic and economic, of the Indian Diaspora comprising of both Indian citizens and non-citizens, their increasing and far-reaching expectations from India and the urgent need to engage the Diaspora more fully in all aspects of India's development, it is time to consider the creation of a separate independent organisation to cater to the Diaspora.
- 37.56. In this context the Committee also studied the ICCR and other commissions as possible role models. The Committee is of the considered opinion that the obvious choice of pattern is the Planning Commission.

Recommendations

- 37.57. The Committee elicited the views of the eminent members of the Diaspora on the nature of the organisational structure, both in India and in countries with large Indian Diaspora. Based on these, the Committee recommends the setting up of an **autonomous and empowered** body structured along the lines of the Planning Commission. Prime minister should be the Chairperson *ex-officio* of this organisation. Prime Minister's Chairmanship would lend the proposed setup dignity and effectiveness. It would also send the appropriate signals to our Diaspora about the importance we attach to our relations with them.
- 37.58. The Deputy Chairperson should be the Executive President and hold the rank of a Cabinet Minister in the organisation. He or she should be a personage of eminent stature so that he/she lends a dignity to the office. Such a setup would ensure access to the highest levels of political power, which would be necessary for the efficient functioning of this organisation.
- 37.59. In addition to the Executive President, the organisation may have five members to begin with.
- (i) The *ex-officio* Chairperson will be PM.
 - (ii) The Deputy Chairperson (Executive President) would have the rank of a Cabinet Minister
 - (iii) A Member-Secretary as in the Planning Commission, who should be a full time incumbent, to coordinate various administrative, financial and other functions. The incumbent of this post should be a full-time retired or serving officer from the Indian Foreign Service, whose long exposure to and wide experience of dealing with NRIs/PIOs would be invaluable asset in the running of the organisation. He should also hold charge of the grievance redressal mechanism and enabling legislations.
 - (iv) There would be a Member for science and technology.
 - (v) There would be a Member for cultural, education and media matters

- (vi) There would be a Member trade, investment and economic matters.
 - (vii) There would be a Member health care, philanthropy, and NGOs.
- 37.60. The Deputy Chairperson (Executive President) and the Member-Secretary should be full time members. One of the Members in the proposed Commission could be a person of eminence from the Diaspora, who is prepared to be based in India for the duration of his tenure. Members could be on deputation from NGOs, universities and or respected personalities of stature and repute. The Deputy Chairperson and the Members should be given the perquisites and privileges as given to the Members of the Planning Commission.
- 37.61. At the support level a set comprising of a joint secretary, a director and three senior scale officers should support the Deputy Chairperson's and each Member's office.
- 37.62. Individuals highly trained in public dealings and with experience of NRIs should be inducted for the staff functions. Attempts should be geared to making this a paperless office, using the latest of modern technology and consequently minimizing the need for staff support.
- 37.63. The office of the Deputy Chairperson and each Member should be provided with a suitable complement of personal staff. There should be a common pool for secretarial assistance and clerks for the joint secretaries. The directors and senior scale officers should be encouraged to work as desk officers. A pool of three messengers should be provided to take care of the needs of the entire organisation.
- 37.64. The Committee feels that continuity is of prime importance in the functioning of this organisation. Hence all personnel in this body should have five-year tenures. For the officers up to the rank of joint secretary, the first 6 months should be treated as probation. While the Committee does not favour its having its own service and recruitment rules, it feels that officers and staff could be drawn from the government on deputation, or on contract basis from any available resource pool including the private sector.
- 37.65. The proposed organisation should have a governing body and an advisory council along the lines of the ICCR, with representation from eminent NRIs and PIOs. The governing body should have appropriate representation by the secretaries of various departments along the lines of ICCR. The advisory council should have representatives from eminent Diaspora members from all regions of the globe.
- 37.66. The Committee feels that there can be two mechanisms for interaction of this Commission with the Parliament.
- 37.67. One option would be to set up a separate standing committee on the Diaspora. This Standing Committee of Parliament should have up to 24 members from both the Houses of Parliament and a cross-party representation.

- 37.68. Alternatively, a second option would be to create a special sub-commission under the Sub-Committee of External Affairs consisting of up to 11 MPs. The High Level Committee recommends, on functional considerations, the setting up of a small Sub-Committee under the Sub-Committee of External Affairs.
- 37.69. The Committee feels that representation of the Diaspora in Parliament is not feasible but their representation on such a high level advisory board would meet, at least partly, the aspirations of the Diaspora for a more meaningful engagement with India. Such a direct involvement of the Diaspora would give them a deeper sense of participation in India's development. The governing body should also be encouraged to invite eminent individuals from NGOs and universities to participate in its activities for a 5-year term each.
- 37.70. The Committee recommends that the main organisation should also possess a redressal/dispute resolution mechanism under the charge of the Member-Secretary.
- 37.71. After examining the functioning of various models, the Committee is of the opinion that this organisation will need to begin with an estimated annual budget of around Rupees 50 crores. A mechanism for reviewing its budgetary need along the lines of the ICCR could be put in place for the future.
- 37.72. The Committee observes that there is an objective necessity of setting up field units of this organisation in the State Governments. Those states, which have produced demonstrably more numbers of PIOs/NRIs, should first set up these field units. These field units should work in close coordination with the central organisation.
- 37.73. Creation of similar small units in organisations like FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM, other Apex Chambers of Commerce, and Export Promotion Councils is also recommended to provide a proper coordination of objectives. These units would help the main body to interact purposefully with the Diaspora.
- 37.74. The Committee cannot sufficiently emphasize that fast and effective communication is the key element of leveraging the Diaspora for mutual benefit. A central database of information about NRIs/PIOs and their expertise, availability, willingness to donate time, energy and money, and travel plans must be maintained and made accessible to all our Missions and private industry organisations. A fast and efficient versatile web portal should underwrite this communication process.
- 37.75. The Committee recommends that our database must have elements like the South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA), which matches skill shortages in South Africa with the overseas locations of expatriate associations and others, maintaining a roster of personnel with those skills. Another model of interest to us is the Thai Reverse Brain Drain project (RBD). This is a Website giving expatriates who want to invest in their home countries, detailed information about investment incentives, business and residence regulations, local businesses seeking foreign joint venture partners and targeted investment opportunities.

- 37.76. The Committee further recommends that the central commission should be in close communication with India's Missions/Posts abroad. One officer of the rank of Minister should be posted in each Mission in countries where there are large concentrations of the Diaspora. This officer should be designated to deal with community affairs and maintain close interaction with the members of the Indian community in that country. The primary charge of this officer would be to provide coordination and liaison between the Mission and the Diaspora in the jurisdiction of that Mission. Each mission should maintain a select roster of consultants/professional experts from the Diaspora, who are ready to dedicate their time and effort to relevant institutions in India on an honorary basis. They could also be urged to share their ideas and expertise on a continuing basis – even from where they are located – by making proper use of modern communication technology.
- 37.77. After discussions with a large number of members of the Diaspora from all over the world, the Committee recommends that an Advisory Council may be constituted comprising of eminent NRIs/PIOs in the respective countries to advise the Mission with respect to matters relating to the Diaspora. This Advisory Council should be a flexible informal body changing to accommodate all shades of diasporic representation and not so rigidly structured as to create problems. The members of this Advisory Council should be rotated to allow for such variations.
- 37.78. The Committee also is of the considered view that the proposed organisation should be allowed to form a foundation to receive charitable and philanthropic donations. It should be also allowed to generate funds through sponsorships from private individuals and corporations.
- The Commission should encourage Indian and diasporic academia to study Diaspora issues on an on-going basis. It should also hold academic conferences and other Diaspora related functions.
- 37.79. The creation of such a central single-window organisation for looking after all the needs of the Diaspora would give the members of the Diaspora tremendous sense of involvement and participation. There is need for major structural and administrative reforms to sensitise field-level officials to optimally leverage the enormous reservoir of skills, talent, technology, idealism and funds of the Indian Diaspora.
- 37.80. The setting up of a dedicated central office would at once recognize and address their needs in a constructive manner, and at the same time engage their participation with India. The proposed central unit could be the primary institution for handling the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and organizing Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. It could work out of the proposed Pravasi Bharatiya Bhavan. The Committee feels that this proposed central organisation with its State constituents should be able to provide direction and focus to enhance our efforts to engage with our Diaspora constructively and in mutually beneficial ways.

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