

सत्यमेव जयते

Embassy of India ASTANA

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India Hosts the 1st PIO Parliamentarian Conference

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the first Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) Parliamentarian Conference in New Delhi on 9th January, 2018. In his address, Prime Minister Modi said that though the PIOs may have left India over the course of hundreds of years, India continues to have a place in their minds and hearts. He added that while they kept the Indian-ness alive in themselves, they imbibed the language, food and dress of their adopted lands.

He lauded that PIOs have left their impressions in the fields of sports, arts and cinema on global platform. He underscored that they are today Prime Ministers of Mauritius, Portugal and Ireland and they have been Heads of State/Government in many other countries. He stated that the achievements and successes of PIOs are a matter of pride and respect for India.

He asserted that the global impression about India has changed over the last few years because India is transforming itself. He pointed out that in addition to the changes at economic and social levels, the changes have also come about at the level of ideas as well. He added that the hopes and aspirations of Indians are at an all time high. He outlined the achievements made by India in the last few years as a result of far reaching policy reforms undertaken in the economy: a record US\$ 60 billion in FDI receipts in 2016-17, and improvement in the Ease of Doing Business ranking by 42 notches, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index by 32 notches, the Global Innovation Index by 21 notches and the Logistics Performance Index by 19 points.

He recognized the contribution made by Indians living abroad to India's economy with large amount of remittances. He noted that leaders of some of the world's top companies are overseas Indians and appreciated that they fully understand India's economy and have strong confidence in India's developmental journey. He emphasized that the values of Indian civilization and culture can provide guidance to the entire world in an era of instability.

Two thematic sessions "PIO Parliamentarians: A journey from Struggle to Parliament" and "Resurgent India: Role of PIO Parliamentarians" were held. The PIO Parliamentarians shared their experiences including about maintaining connections to their roots in India.

In her opening remarks at the valedictory session of the Conference, External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj said that history of migration and the struggles undergone by the Indian diaspora in the Giritiya Countries is an inspiring story of unflinching human spirit, courage and resoluteness. She said that India is one of the pioneers in recognising the importance of its overseas population and establishing an institutional framework for a sustainable and mutually beneficial engagement with its Diaspora. She informed that the government has initiated actions to forge a partnership that would best serve India as a rapidly growing knowledge economy - to drive innovation and entrepreneurship - and meet the aspirations of the overseas Indian community as a significant constituency across the world.

Vice President Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu delivered key note address at the valedictory session of the Conference. He asserted that the success of the Indian diaspora in different parts of the world is a clear reflection of the strength of Indian values of assimilation and inclusivity. He lauded the enormous contribution of Indian diaspora in strengthening India's cultural, literary, political and economic bonds across the world. He urged them to contribute to the ongoing efforts to build a New India.

134 PIO Parliamentarians from 24 countries participated in the conference. Among the prominent participants of the Conference was former President of Guyana Shri Bharat Jagdevji. The Conference broke a new ground in further strengthening and diversifying India's engagement with the diaspora. It helped open new vistas of establishing regular dialogues and exchange of visits and views with the PIO law makers.



External Affairs Minister Inaugurates Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Singapore

External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj inaugurated the Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas of ASEAN countries on the theme "Ancient Route, New Journey: Diaspora in the Dynamic ASEAN-India Partnership" in Singapore on 7th January, 2018. The year 2018 marks the 25th anniversary of India-ASEAN partnership and Singapore is the chair of ASEAN grouping this year. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) aims to strengthen engagement of overseas Indian community with the Government of India, reconnect them with their roots and celebrate their achievements and contributions.



In her address at the ASEAN-India PBD, Smt. Swaraj presented the transformed and new India to the Indian Diaspora. She praised the members of the diaspora saying that they are good neighbours, hardworking people and law abiding citizens. She underscored the civilizational and cultural depth among India-ASEAN nations. She said that India's dialogue partnership with ASEAN has evolved into a strategic partnership and the Indian diaspora provides a platform for stronger ties with the grouping. About 3,000 delegates from all ASEAN countries, including ministers, eminent personalities, business and socio-political leaders participated in the event.

Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and Vishwa Hindi Divas in Kazakhstan

The Embassy celebrated the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) and Vishwa Hindi Divas at Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), Astana on 9th January, 2018. Ambassador Shri Prabhat Kumar welcomed the guests and addressed the gathering. He said that the PBD is celebrated annually on 9th January to commemorate the day in 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. He spoke about the importance of celebrating the PBD.



He informed that the Embassy would organize a Quiz Contest online from April 10-16, 2018 to commemorate the 100 years of Champaran Satyagraha and called upon the members of Indian community to participate in the Quiz. He explained that since Aadhaar Card is issued for residents, it is not mandatory for NRIs for availing of various services in India.

He stated that the 1st World Hindi Conference was organized in India on 10th January, 1975 and Vishwa Hindi Divas is celebrated on 10th January every year to promote Hindi language worldwide. He informed that 11th World Hindi Conference would be held in Mauritius later this year. He spoke about the efforts made by the Embassy to promote Hindi in Kazakhstan. He said that Hindi is taught at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) and Hindi classes are organized at InCham and the Centre for Indian Classical Dances in Almaty. He underscored that the first Hindi-Kazakh-Hindi Dictionary was brought out by the Embassy with the support of KazNU in 2016. He read out a message by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on the occasion of the Vishwa Hindi Divas.

A thematic film on PBD and a short film on 10th Vishwa Hindi Sammelan held in Bhopal in September, 2015 were screened. Members of Indian community viz., Shri Prashant Jamwal and Shri Sachin Desai, and ICCR alumna Ms. Zhanar Kassymova spoke on some important aspects of Hindi language and recited Hindi poems. The ICC organized a short cultural programme.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated in Almaty at the Representative Office of India on 9th January, 2018. Shri Martin Cyriac Clemense J. B., Second Secretary read out the excerpts of Prime Minister's address at the inaugural session of the PIO-Parliamentarian Conference held in New Delhi earlier in the day. The thematic film on PBD was screened. Members of Indian community viz., Shri Sundaram Sheshadri (InCham), Shri Dhushyant Kumar, Shri George Daniel, Shri Sat Paul Mawalia and Shri Abdul Moktadir spoke on the occasion.

Applications Invited for ICCR Scholarships for the Academic Year 2018-19

Applications are invited from citizens of Kazakhstan for scholarships awarded under Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)'s General Scholarship Scheme for the academic year 2018-19 for studying Undergraduate, Post-graduate and Doctoral/Post-Doctoral Research programmes in various Universities/Educational Institutions in India. The scholarships are granted for pursuing studies in various subjects such as Arts, Science, Engineering, Business Administration, Accounts, Commerce, Performing Arts and Humanities.



The interested candidates may submit their applications online through ICCR Scholarship Portal "Admissions to Alumni" (A2A) at: <http://205.147.97.190/iccr/> by 15th February, 2018. For further information, they may contact the Indian Cultural Centre, Astana at Tel. +7 (7172) 449884 and +7 7019431504 or by email: diricc.astana@mea.gov.in.

President Nazarbayev Delivers Annual State of the Nation Address

President Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev delivered the annual state of the nation address on "New Opportunities under the Fourth Industrial Revolution" on 9th January, 2018.

He said that Kazakhstan has overcome many of the global challenges and is entering a phase of intensive economic transformation. He highlighted the implementation of the country's long-term development strategy until 2050, reforms undertaken within the framework of the National Plan of 100 Concrete Steps, systemic efforts made to facilitate industrialisation, constitutional reforms undertaken and adoption of Digital Kazakhstan program. He stated that the era of "oil abundance" is practically coming to an end, and the humanity is entering an era of a new industrial revolution and modern technologies are changing the world. He stressed that this is a historic chance for Kazakhstan to rapidly join the top 30 most developed countries.



He emphasized that the country needs a new path of development and the global trends show that it should primarily be based on introduction of elements of the fourth industrial revolution. He outlined major steps on modernisation and digitization of the economy under the following 10 tasks: Industrialization must become the flagship of introducing new technologies; Further development of resource potential; Adoption of smart technologies in agriculture; Enhancing the effectiveness of the transport and logistical infrastructure; Introduction of modern technologies in construction and public utilities sector, Rebooting the financial sector, Enhancement of quality of education; Effective state governance; The fight against corruption and the rule of law; and Management of the city on the basis of "smart city" notion.

Ambassador Presents Letter of Credence to President Nazarbayev

Ambassador Shri Prabhat Kumar presented the Letter of Credence of his appointment as the Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan to President Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana on 10th January, 2018.

In his address, President Nazarbayev congratulated India for its accession to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a full member and expressed confidence that India would give new dynamism and depth to the activities of SCO. He stated that Kazakhstan regards India as an important foreign and trade partner. He congratulated Ambassador for his appointment as Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan and wished him success in his new assignment.



Kazakhstani Professionals Attend ITEC Programme

Ms. Laura Kozhekenova, Specialist at the Republican Centre for Health Development, Astana, was selected for the course "Advanced Analytical Techniques: Basic Principles and Application for Quality Assessment of Drugs and Pharmaceuticals" conducted by the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Mohali from 6th November, 2017 to 17th November, 2017; and Dr. Malika Myrzabayeva, Senior Lecturer at Saken Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University, Astana and Ms. Aissarat Gajimuradova, Teacher at Eurasian National University, Astana were selected for the course "Applications of Biotechnology and its Regulation" conducted by the Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi from 20th November, 2017 to 8th December, 2017 under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme funded by the Government of India.

Ms. Aliya Mambetova, Accountant at Individual Entrepreneurship Phoenix Plus, Atyrau was selected for the course "Advanced Certificate Course in English Language & IT Proficiency" conducted by Shriram Institute of Business and Information Technology, New Delhi from 15th November, 2017 to 16th January, 2018; Ms. Gulizat Orazbekova, Teacher at Semey Geological Prospecting College, Semey, was selected for the course "Remote Sensing and Digital Image Processing for Geoscientists" conducted by the Geological Survey of India Training Institute, Hyderabad from 22nd November to 19th December, 2017; and Mr. Arman Ispudinov, Member of Revision Commission over Kostanay Region, Kostanay was selected for the course "Performance Audit" conducted by the International Centre for Information Systems & Audit, Noida from 27th November to 22nd December, 2017 under the ITEC programme.



ISRO Launches 31 Satellites in a Single Flight

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C40) successfully launched 31 satellites in a single flight from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on 12th January, 2018.

The satellites launched comprise a 710-kg Cartosat-2 Series Remote Sensing Satellite, one Microsatellite and one Nanosatellite from India, and 3 Microsatellites and 25 Nanosatellites from six countries, namely, Canada, Finland, France, Republic of Korea, UK and USA. The total weight of all the 31 satellites carried onboard PSLV-C40 is about 1323 kg.



FDI Policy Further Liberalized in Key Sectors

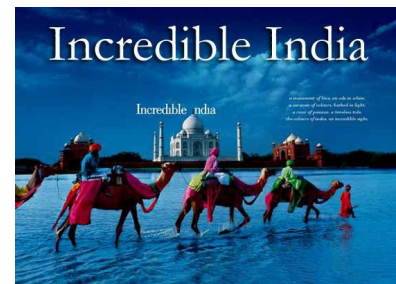
The Government of India further liberalized the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy in key sectors to facilitate ease of doing business in the country on 10th January, 2018. The liberalized policy provides for 100% FDI under automatic route for single brand retail trading and construction development; investment up to 49% by foreign airlines under approval route in Air India; investment by FIIs/FPIs in power exchanges through primary market; issue of shares against non-cash considerations like pre-incorporation expenses, import of machinery, etc under automatic route in case of sectors under automatic route. The revised FDI Policy is expected to lead to larger FDI inflows contributing to growth of investment, income and employment.



Ministry of Tourism Launches Incredible India Digital Calendar 2018

The Ministry of Tourism launched the "Incredible India Digital Calendar-2018" on 12th January, 2018. The Digital Calendar has information on festivals and events happening in the country. It will allow users to create and manage personal events, get regular notifications on upcoming festivals and events, set up customized reminders for individual events, share the events with friends and contacts, etc. Each day will have a stunning image of tourist destinations from across India which can be shared on various social media platforms.

The Digital Calendar can be downloaded on Android and iOS platforms at the following links: Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.app.calincindia&hl=en>; iOS: <https://itunes.apple.com/in/app/incredible-india-calendar/id1332321017?mt=8>



Cruise Tourists Arriving with e-Visa Exempted from Biometric Enrolment

The Government of India on 2nd January, 2018 exempted cruise tourists arriving with e-visa from the requirement of biometric enrolment for a period of three years in order to promote cruise tourism in the country and make India an attractive cruise tourist destination.

As per the schedule of arrivals of cruise ships for the current cruise season 2017-18 and 2019-20, many of the cruise ships coming to India are mega ships with 2000-4000 passengers on board and most of these cruise passengers are expected to arrive on e-Visa. Exempting them from the requirement of biometric enrolment will make their immigration clearance faster, leaving them with more time to spend on shore.



Ministry of Railways Extends SMS Facility Regarding Status of Delayed Trains

The Ministry of Railways on 3rd January, 2018 extended the facility of providing information to passengers through Short Messaging Service (SMS) regarding status of trains running late by more than one hour to 1373 trains including GaribRath, Duranto, Jan Shatabdi, Suvidha, Superfast and Humsafar trains.

The SMS notifying the status of late running is sent to passengers who are boarding the trains at onward intermediate stations. This facility was initially introduced for passengers booked on all Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Tejas and Gatimaan trains from 3rd November, 2017.



Indian Railways
Lifeline to the nation...

Incredible India Destination: Junagadh

Junagadh, located at the base of Girnar Hills in the State of Gujarat, is an ancient fortified city, rich in myth and legend. In Junagadh, bustling bazaars and winding narrow streets alternate with monuments that span two millennia. 14 rock edicts of Mauryan Emperor Ashoka cut into a big rock outside the city bear testimony to its antiquity. The edicts written in Brahmi script belong to 250 BC and are in the nature of official pronouncement of policy and instructions to his officers and subjects. On the same rock are inscriptions in Sanskrit added around 150 AD by Mahakshatrap Rudradaman I, the Saka ruler from the Western Kshatrapas Dynasty.

Girnar Mountain and Temples, Uparkot Fort, Damodar Kund, Maqbara and Shrine of Narsinh Mehta are major attractions in Junagadh.

Girnar Mountain, with an elevation of 1100 m, is an extinct volcano. One can view stunning natural sceneries from the top of the mountain. Beautifully-carved Jain temples built between 1128 and 1500 adorn the mountain. Lord Neminath, the 22nd tirthankara, is said to have died on Mount Girnar after living there for 700 years. The peak of Ambaji at the height of 1010 m is famous for a temple dedicated to Goddess Amba Mata dating back to the 12th century.

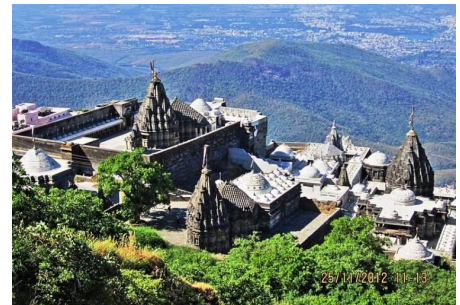
Uparkot Fort, over 2300 years old, is girdled by a wall that is in some places over 20 metres high, with an ornate entrance gateway leading to the ruins. More than 2000 years old buddhist caves are located around Uparkot. Damodar Kund is a sacred bathing place. Maqbara is home to the masoleums of the former rulers of Junagadh and their families. Shrine of Narsinh Mehta is dedicated to a well-known 15th century Vaishnava poet Sant Narsinh Mehta, whose devotional songs are widely sung in Gujarat.

Bhavnath Temple, Darbar Hall Museum, Muchakanda Cave, Akshar Mandir and Willingdon Dam are other tourist attractions in Junagadh.

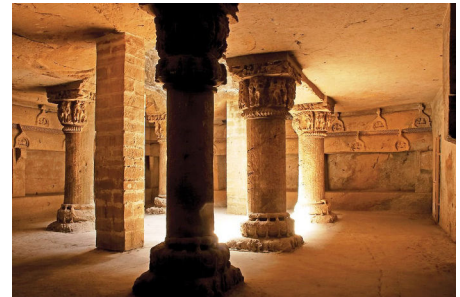
The Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (60 km away from Junagadh), the only remaining habitat of Asiatic lions; Chorwad Sea Resort (66 km); Somnath Temple at Prabhas Patan (88 km); and Tulsi Shyam Hot Springs (160 km) are some of the major tourist attractions near Junagadh.



Emperor Ashoka's Rock Edicts



Jain Temples in Girnar Mountain



Buddhist Caves



Maqbara



Willingdon Dam



Somnath Temple, Prabhas Patan

PHOTO FEATURE

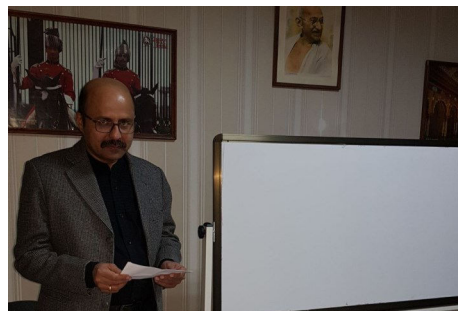
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Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Almaty



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