Pravasi Bharatiya Divas: Celebrating the Spirit of the Indian Diaspora

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The News :

The 18th PBD Convention is scheduled for January 8-10, 2025, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The theme for this year is the “Diaspora’s contribution to a Viksit Bharat” (Developed India).

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), or Non-Resident Indian Day, is a significant event that commemorates the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the development of India and fosters a sense of connection between the country and its overseas citizens. Celebrated annually on January 9, this day holds great cultural, historical, and economic importance for India and its global community.

Historical Significance

The date, January 9, was chosen to mark the return of Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi (emigrant), to India from South Africa in 1915. His return marked the beginning of a transformative movement that led India to its independence. Recognizing the contributions of millions of Indians living abroad, the Government of India decided to celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas from 2003 onwards, as a way to honor the role of the diaspora in the nation’s progress.

Objectives of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

The primary goals of PBD are:

1. **Engaging the Diaspora**: Strengthening the emotional, cultural, and economic ties between India and its diaspora.
2. **Policy Inputs**: Using the expertise and experience of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) to shape policies and initiatives.
3. **Recognition and Awards**: Honoring individuals and organizations for outstanding contributions to their fields or their role in strengthening India’s global image.

Structure of the Celebration

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with various state governments and stakeholders. The event typically features:

1. **Conferences and Seminars**: Experts from diverse fields such as technology, education, health, and business share their insights and discuss opportunities for collaboration.
2. **Cultural Performances**: Celebrating India's rich heritage through music, dance, and art.
3. **Awards Ceremony**: The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards are presented by the President of India to notable members of the diaspora.
4. **Interactive Sessions**: Opportunities for networking and collaboration between Indian and overseas stakeholders.

Contributions of the Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora, one of the largest in the world, plays a pivotal role in shaping the global perception of India. With over 32 million Indians living abroad, they have made significant contributions in areas such as:

- **Economic Development**: Remittances from NRIs contribute billions to the Indian economy annually, supporting infrastructure, education, and healthcare.
- **Cultural Diplomacy**: Indian expatriates promote the country's rich culture, traditions, and values, strengthening India's soft power.
- **Innovation and Expertise**: Many members of the diaspora hold prominent positions in global corporations, academia, and research, driving innovation and excellence.

Themes and Evolution

Each year, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas adopts a specific theme to reflect contemporary issues and priorities. Recent themes have included leveraging technology, fostering economic ties, and promoting youth engagement. The event has evolved from a single-day celebration to a biennial convention, ensuring greater focus and depth in its proceedings.

Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY): Empowering Migrant Workers

The Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY), a skill development scheme initiated by the Ministry of External Affairs, aims to enhance the skill sets of potential emigrant workers in select sectors and job roles. Aligned with international standards, the scheme facilitates overseas employment opportunities by equipping workers with the necessary skills to excel globally.

Conclusion

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas serves as a bridge between India and its diaspora, celebrating their achievements and recognizing their role in the nation's journey. As India continues to grow as a global power, the contributions of its overseas citizens remain indispensable. This day not only honors their efforts but also reaffirms the enduring connection between India and its global family.

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UPSC Mains Question

Q) ‘Indian Diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries’. Comment with examples. (2020)

Q) The Indian Diaspora has an important role to play in South East Asian countries economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian Diaspora in South-East Asia in this context. (2017)

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