The connotations of the term Diaspora has gone far beyond forced exile and desire for homeland. Today, Diaspora is a generic concept of a trans-national population, and India represents this concept in a major way,” said Dr. A. Didar Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), at the inauguration of the two-day International Conference on ‘Diaspora and Development: Prospects and Implications for Nation States’, held at the Indira Gandhi National Open University’s (IGNOU) Convention Centre on September 7.

Jointly organised by the School of Extension and Development Studies (SOEDS) and the School of Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies (SOITS), the conference broadly addresses the socio-economic, political, cultural and gender issues to provide holistic perspectives in understanding the interlinkages in diaspora and development.

The conference saw the participation of diaspora experts from over 25 countries, who deliberated upon various themes such as Diaspora and Development Dynamics: Issues, Strategies and Practices; Diaspora Finance and Socio-Economic Development; Human Development; Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion; Diasporic Writings; Gender in the Diaspora; and Films & Theatre.

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“In many ways, IGNOU is like the Diaspora. In most countries, Diaspora is quite a small community, but it punches far beyond its weight. IGNOU is doing the same in many ways,” said Dr. Singh, who was the Chief Guest at the event.

“There have been three major waves of economic migration in India till now – the indentured labour migration during colonial times; the movement from South Asia to the Gulf in the post Independence period; and the movement of professional/skilled workers to the West. However, the most unique wave is the return migration, wherein these professionals are coming back to India in large numbers,” he added.

While delivering his Presidential Address, Vice Chancellor Prof. V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai announced that IGNOU is in the process of setting up a
Harness the Best Diaspora Practices  
Mark Boyle, Chair in Geography and Head of the Department of Geography, NUI Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland

“A diaspora strategy is an explicit policy initiative or series of policy initiatives enacted by a sending state, or its people, aimed at fortifying and developing relationships with expatriate communities, diasporic populations, and foreign constituencies who share a special affinity.”

Diaspora Link Benefits Home Country  
Metka Hercog, Christiane Kuptsch, Gabriela Tejada, Jean-Claude Bolay, a team of researchers based in Switzerland

“The benefits that highly skilled migrants can bring to their home countries are increasingly regarded as important for development and many countries are seeking ways to profit from the experiences of diaspora. Policies of home countries are usually put to the forefront when discussing diaspora engagement.”

How to Overcome the Challenges of African Brain Drain?  
Brij Maharaj, Professor, School of Environmental Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

“Globalisation of the world markets has paved the way for the movement of people with scarce skills across national boundaries with relative ease. Professionals have been extremely susceptible, given their particular knowledge and skills base. The trend is for such professionals from developing countries, to fill the gaps in the labour market in developed countries.”

Migration-led Development: Tales of Two States  
Margaret Walton-Roberts, Geography and ES Dept., Wilfrid Laurier University

“Understanding the economic development of many nations in the Global South can no longer be comprehensively charted without a focus on international labour migration and its associated socio-economic and spatial transformations.”

India’s Diaspora Connect: Financial Instruments, Strategy, and Options  
R.P. Pradhan, Assistant Professor, Humanities & Management Group, BITS Pilani, K K Birla Goa Campus

“India’s strongest financial connect with its diaspora community has been through India Development Bond, Resurgent India Bond, and India Millennium Deposits. On three occasions, this hard currency fund platform has provided new options for development finance.”

Diaspora Bonds helps the Caribbean  
Jwala Rambarran, Chairman, National Institute for Higher Education, Research Science & Technology, Trinidad & Tobago

“The Caribbean has one of the highest emigration rates in the world and the region is the largest recipient of remittances in relation to its GDP. At the same time, many Caribbean countries have seen a dramatic reduction in flows of official development assistance (ODA) and have been encour-

Delegates at the Plenary Session on Diaspora and Development Dynamics: Issues, Strategies and Practices.
tering difficulties in obtaining private financing using traditional financial instruments, a situation which jeopardises their prospects for long-term growth and employment generation.”

**Migrants’ Remittances for Development Oriented Projects can Help Bangladesh**
*Md. Salahuddin and Shafiul Alam, Assistant Professor, School of Business Studies, Southeast University, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

“The study investigates the causal relationship between migrants’ remittances and economic growth in Bangladesh, the 14th largest recipient of remittances in the world, using the most recent time series data for the period of 1976-2009. The Johansen co-integration technique and error correction methods are employed to examine the long run and the short run relationship between migrants’ remittances and economic growth in Bangladesh.”

**Indonesian Migrants are Foreign Exchange Heroes**
*Agung Setiyo Wibowo, Researcher, Indonesia*

“Indonesia is geographically the largest and most populous country in Southeast Asia. Even though, it has the largest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the region, the unemployment and poverty still remain high to date.”

**Diaspora as a Knowledge Community**
*Chaminda Hettiarachchi, Associate Director, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Colombo, Sri Lanka*

“Sri Lanka being a nation of about 20 million people, has a proportionately very high population of diaspora of 1 million living in many parts of the world. In a critical moment of the history, when the country is trying to rebuild the nation after three decades of ethnic war, Diasporic people can play a major role in national reconstruction process with their expertise and their global experience. The Sri Lankan diaspora therefore is a very important knowledge community in nation building in post war Sri Lanka.”

**Philanthropy and Sustainable Development in Regional Towns**
*T.L.S. Bhaskar, Project Coordinator, Indian Council of Overseas Employment, East of Kailash, New Delhi*

“Diaspora philanthropy of the Guntur region has transformed from being individual driven to one that is driven institutionally. What was initially pursued by individuals is now, more or less, institutionalised – both by the government and non-government bodies – at the village and district levels.”

**Reverse Brain Drain: Millennial Strategies by Developed and Developing Countries**
*Anjali Sahay, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Programme Director, International Studies, Gannon University, Pennsylvania, USA*

“This study is an attempt at understanding both the roles played by developed countries, in particular the United States in retaining foreign talent in their countries as well as developing countries in making their countries more attractive to foreign talent.”

**Can the Diaspora be an agent of Development?**
*Thandi, Shinder S., Head of Department of Economics, Finance and Accounting at Coventry University*

“If the challenges are addressed properly, diaspora has a huge potential for development. The Punjabi diaspora has already shown their impact in terms of diaspora finance – remittances, foreign direct investment, philanthropic finance, etc.”

**Filipino Diaspora’s Soft Knowledge Helps for the Development of the Home Country**
*Sheila Siar, Ph.D. Candidate, Development Studies, University of Auckland*

“The study finds the important role of the transmission of cultural knowledge, skills in creative arts, capacity building skills, settlement and legal assistance, migration information and management tools from the diaspora to individuals and groups in the Philippines.”

**Dr. Samson S. Chiru speaking at the Parallel Session I ‘Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion.’**

Prof. Mizan R. Miah delivering the Key Note Address.
Engaging Diaspora for Development

Centre for Diasporic Studies at the University campus. “I am confident that this conference will provide an opportunity to share thoughts on how India can benefit by mutual interactions,” Prof. Pillai said.

Prof. Mizan R. Miah, Director, School of Social Work, Southern Illinois University, USA, delivered the Key Note Address on ‘The Global Community of Diaspora: Contributions, Challenges and Prospects.’

While throwing light on the various themes of the conference, Prof. Miah urged, “Diasporians of the world should unite by contributing towards making the world a better, safer place for peaceful co-existence by the level of our talents, passion and productive contribution towards all kinds of development – social, cultural, political and economic. For the people of Diaspora, development should lead to the reduction of poverty and poverty reduction should lead to the reduction of illiteracy, intolerance and hostility, which in turn should usher in a new era of world peace.”

While delivering the Welcome Address, Pro-Vice Chancellor Dr. Latha Pillai said, “Diaspora and Development have been areas of academic discussion and research since the beginning of civilisation. This topic is more relevant today because of the changes that have taken place due to the migration patterns and advances in ICT. Diasporic studies and literature are seen as meaningful change agents.”

Prof. B.K. Pattanaik, Director, SOEDS and Conference Coordinator, delivered the Vote of Thanks.

“Diaspora is a complex issue. Planning on diaspora must take into account various socio-political, economic and cultural issues in holistic perspective.”,

Prof. B.K. Pattanaik
Conference Coordinator

Dr. Sadananda Sahoo
Joint Coordinator