

Bringing the Diaspora Home: India's Expatriate Evacuation Operations

New Delhi, 5 January 2017: In the run-up to the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi this weekend, in Bangalore, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), in partnership with Carnegie India, today launched the report 'Bringing the Diaspora Home: India's Expatriate Evacuation Operations' by Dr. Constantino Xavier.

The event was chaired by **Dr. A. Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI** who outlined the economic importance of this subject and the relevance of the report to bring awareness on India's accomplishments in its successful evacuation operations.

Dr. C. Raja Mohan, Director, Carnegie India who remarked on the evolution of Diaspora engagement since the 19th century; the importance of social media outreach; and regional pressures from within the country that impact the evacuation operations.

This event was also attended by **Ambassador Ranjan Mathai, former Foreign Secretary** who commended the timing of the event given its importance to the Diaspora and its proximity to the PBD 2017. He also outlined the importance of flexible approaches for different contexts encountered with each operation along with a good understanding of the destination country. **Vice-Admiral (ret.) Anup Singh** emphasized the importance of maritime diplomacy and international relations in facilitating evacuation operations.

More than 11 million Indian citizens now reside worldwide, more than 20 million travel internationally every year, and around ten million Indian passports are issued every year. Given their rising role in India's economic development, with their remittances accounting for more than 3 per cent of its GDP, Overseas Indians have now become a priority for New Delhi's foreign and security policies. The Indian government has therefore committed unprecedented attention to the safety of the diaspora, especially during recent crises in the Gulf region. However, given the lack of any formal doctrine or emergency plan, the paper shows that the relative success of India's evacuation operations has mostly been due to the individual sacrifices of its officials and that the government must go beyond punctual efforts and quick-fix solutions.

Based on new data and interviews with officials, **Dr. Xavier's** paper assesses India's experience in conducting these missions and forwards policy recommendations on how these can be improved. Such measures should include institutionalizing best practices as standard operating procedures and emergency plans; improving operational coordination between various ministries and agencies; training its diplomatic cadre to operate in hostile environments; increasing operational coordination and cooperation with foreign governments; and attributing a greater role to the armed forces, strengthening its capacity to plan and deploy in tandem with civilian authorities.

The paper can be downloaded at <http://ceip.org/2hO7Dqb>

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