

Members of the Indian Diaspora

Participants in the BKJ quiz

Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome everyone to this afternoon's function. Today, we celebrate the 18th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister in Bhuvaneshwar, Odisha. It is the celebration of the incredible journey and achievements of over 32 million Indians who have made their mark across the globe while keeping their connection to their motherland alive.

Distinguished Guests,

This day holds special significance as it marks the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India on January 9, 1915. Just as Gandhi ji returned to transform the destiny of our nation, today's Pravasi Bhartiyas continue to build bridges between India and the world, contributing their knowledge, expertise, and resources to both their adopted homes and their motherland.

The story of the Indian diaspora is one of courage, perseverance, and success. What makes this success truly remarkable is how our diaspora has maintained its cultural roots while adapting to new environments. In every corner of the world, you'll find Indian festivals being celebrated, our traditional arts being practiced, and our values being passed down to the next generation. This cultural preservation, combined with the ability to embrace diversity, makes our diaspora truly unique.

This year's theme is *Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat*. The contribution of Pravasi Bhartiyas to India's development has been immense. Through investments, knowledge transfer, and philanthropy, they have played a crucial role in India's growth story. Their achievements abroad have not only brought pride to India but have also opened doors for future generations of Indians seeking opportunities globally.

Today's India is different from the India that Gandhiji returned to. We are now one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a leader in technology and innovation, and an increasingly influential voice on the global stage. This transformation has been possible in part due to the strong support and advocacy of our global Indian family.

Ladies and gentlemen,

An integral part of the celebrations are the youth. The PBD Youth Conclave was inaugurated by the External Affairs Minister of India, Dr S. Jaishankar, yesterday. Allow me to tell you some points that he made. We will do well to recognize the contributions that the younger generation is making. All the key developments of today, from AI to Evs, innovation or startups, space or drones, chess, cricket are being shaped by the young, and they are the main stakeholders in all of them. It is important for us to secure the future of our youth and invest in our youth in order to them to realize their full potential.

As India develops as a modern, progressive and inclusive society, within a democratic framework on the two legs of technology and tradition, the youth will a defining factor for the pace of achieving this goal.

In this regard, I am happy to see that the a youth-centric initiative, *Bharat Ko Janiye* or *Know India* quiz saw such enthusiastic participation in Seychelles. Globally there were 123 thousand registrations and 352 from Seychelles. 14 participants from Seychelles got the perfect score. Two participants not only got all questions correct, but were also among the top 50 fastest in the world, narrowly missing out being in the top 30 slots. We will facilitate those who came at top, but more importantly, I thank and congratulate all those who participated. Having participated in the BKJ quiz, I would urge the young diaspora members to bring their Seychellois friends to India, especially those who have never been there. The Maha Kumbh taking place in Prayagraj in North India would be one such opportunity!

To the pravasi brothers and sisters, I say: Your achievements in Seychelles make us proud, your contributions to the India-Seychelles friendship makes us stronger, and your connection to India makes our global family complete. Let us honor the spirit of Gandhiji's return by continuing to give back to the motherland while fully contributing to the peace, prosperity and development of Seychelles.

Thank you.
