

# South East Asia





*The Chairman of the Indian National Army, Sardar Ishar Singh Narula, a resident of Thailand witnessing Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose signing visitors book at Emerald Buddha Temple (Wat Pra Kaey), Bangkok in the year 1943*



*Bird view of present building of Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Bangkok, which consists of Diwan Hall, Langar Hall, Kindergarten School and Guru Nanak Mission Clinic. All the activities of the community are being held here.*

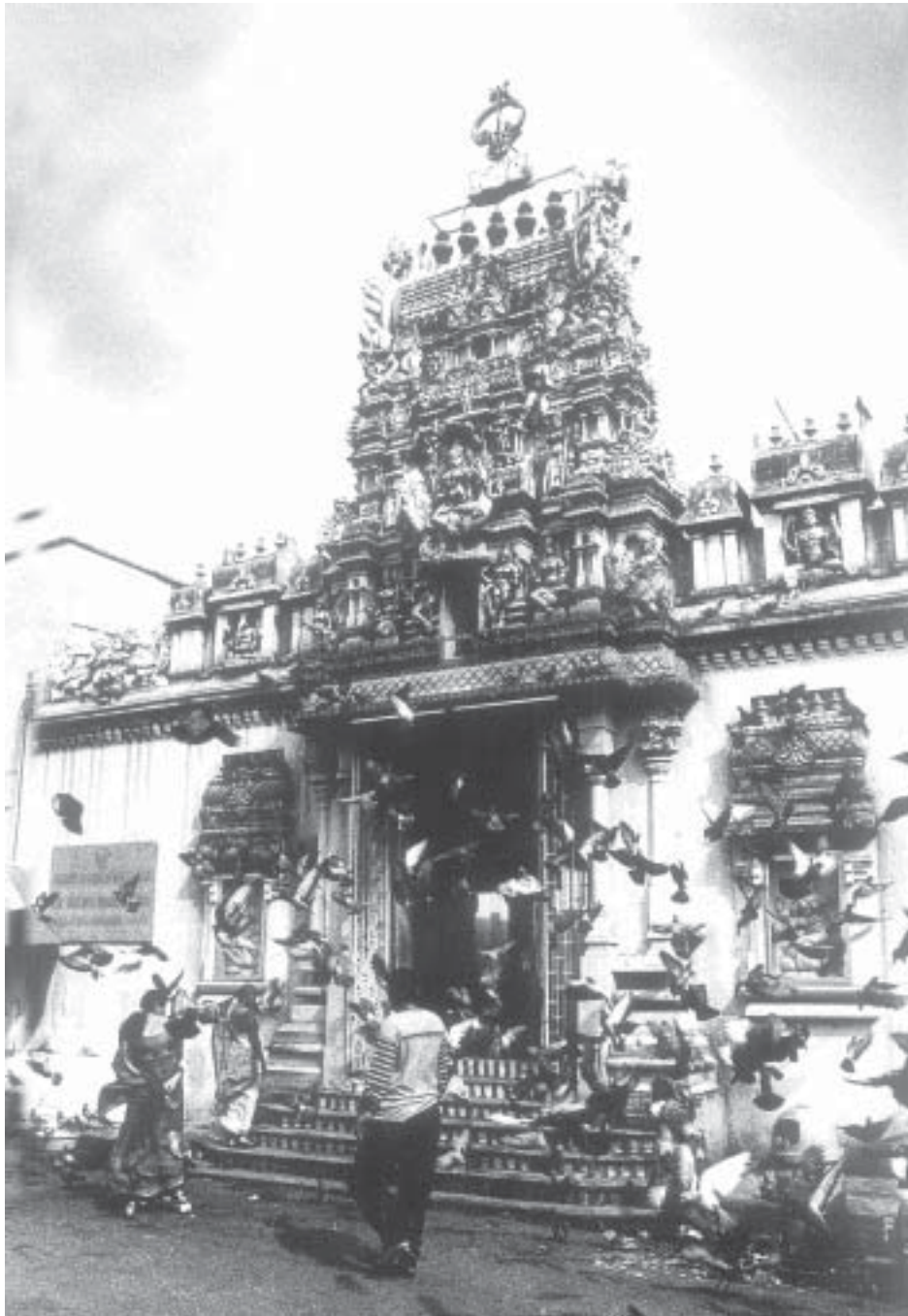
*Indo-Bharat Rayon, Aditya Birla Group's flagship venture – first Viscose Staple Fibre Plant in Indonesia which started production in 1982*



*Hill Temple, Batu Caves, Malaysia where annual Thai Pusam festival is held. To reach the temple, one has to climb a steep flight of 272 steps*



*Lt.K. R. Das, a former INA Member, representing the Netaji Welfare Foundation, handing over a Memorandum to the Indian Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, during his visit to Malaysia in May 2001. Also seen in the photograph is Mr. S. P. Narayanaswamy, Hon. Secretary, Netaji Centre, Kuala Lumpur*



*One of the Hindu Temples in Malaysia. The country abounds with many such beautiful and intricately sculptured temples*



*President Nathan of Singapore*



*Serangoon Road with road signs giving Indian names, Singapore*



*Thenday Yutthapani Temple, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*



*Islamic Mosque, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*



## Introduction

India's cultural relations with Southeast Asia are one of the most fascinating fields of history. This interaction, which precedes the beginning of the Christian era, has left an indelible impression on almost every aspect of life in a number of countries of the region. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this intercourse has been a vital factor in shaping the history of this area. The most unique feature of this interaction is that it has been entirely peaceful. There is probably no other example in the history of mankind of such cross fertilization between different cultures and people for over two millennia without any involvement of military force.

- 20.2. Early Indian migration is a subject of debate among scholars. There is, however, a general agreement that it took place both by land and sea routes. Different views have been expressed about the causes of Indian migration to Southeast Asia. There is considerable merit in the view that the primary motive for migration was economic. Initially, the mineral wealth of Southeast Asia appears to have been a major attraction for Indians. The deep imprint of intense interaction is visible even today in the language and literature, religion and philosophy, art and architecture, customs and manners of the whole of Indo-China, Indonesia, Burma (now Myanmar), Thailand and the Malaysian peninsula. The famous Angkorwat and other Hindu temples in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, etc. are well-known. However, it is not so well-known that the first royal *shiva linga* in Southeast Asia was established at Mi-Son near Da Nang in Vietnam and the oldest Sanskrit inscription was found in a village named Vo Canh near Nha Trang in the southern part of Vietnam.
- 20.3. India also benefited considerably from its interactions with Southeast Asia. The trade with Southeast Asia played an important role in India's prosperity. The commonly used word '*lungi*' has its origin in the Burmese word '*longi*'. There is evidence of relations between several kingdoms of Southeast Asia and the royal households of coastal India. It must, however, be emphasized that the number of Indian migrants to Southeast Asia was very small. Large scale migrations have only taken place as a result of colonial connections mainly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Indian Emigration During the Colonial Period

- 20.4. Indian emigration during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to the British, French and Dutch colonies was unprecedented. There are two types of emigration that took place during this period, namely (a) emigration of contract labourers under the 'indenture system' or 'Kangani' system; and (b) 'free' or 'passage' emigration of traders, clerks, bureaucrats and professionals.
- 20.5. With the abolition of slavery, particularly in the British Empire and the French and Dutch colonies in 1834, 1846 and 1873 respectively, there was a severe shortage of labourers working in sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, rice and rubber plantations in their colonies. India and China became the obvious alternative sources of labour. During the period 1852 to 1937, approximately 2 million Indians went to Malaya and approximately 2.5 million to Myanmar. Since these colonies were situated not far from India, a majority of the migrants returned home after serving as plantation labourers. After 1920, the 'Kangani' emigration gradually gave way to individual or unrecruited migration due to a fall in the demand for Indian labour.
- 20.6. The second type of migration, namely, 'free' or 'passage' migration of traders and artisans took place to Myanmar and Malaysia during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. They included Baniyas from the United Provinces (modern UP), Marwaris from Rajputana, Chettiyars from Madras, Gujaratis, Maharashtrians and Punjabis.
- 20.7. A number of Punjabis from the Gujranwala region of West Punjab (now Pakistan) had also migrated to Thailand before India's independence. Prior to World War II, specially in Malaysia and Singapore, Indians had little political interest in their countries of residence, their activities being largely oriented towards the mother country with which they retained strong economic, sentimental and political links. This orientation of the Indians in Malaya was strengthened by periodic visits by Indian leaders like Pt. Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and Srinivas Sastri. It was finally brought into the open with the establishment of the Indian National Army (INA) in Malaya. Between 1942 and 1945, thousands of Indians volunteered to join the INA for the purpose of fighting for the independence of India. In addition, Indian Independence League (IIL) organisations were established in all leading centres in Southeast Asia to recruit men, collect funds and generally to coordinate the Independence Movement. Men and money poured into the independence movement on an unprecedented scale from all over Southeast Asia. After Independence small numbers of Indians have continued to migrate to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. These have been mainly professionals working for Indian joint ventures and other institutions. In recent times many local companies have also engaged Indian professionals. In Thailand there are also blue collar workers from the Gorakhpur region in U.P.
- 20.8. The following table presents a comparative picture of the Indian community in the South East Asian countries and the countries of the former Indo-China:

**Table 20.1: The Indian Diaspora in the countries covered in this chapter**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>NRIs</b>	<b>PIOs</b>	<b>Stateless</b>	<b>% of the Population</b>
<b>Brunei</b>	331,000	7,000	500	100	2.3%
<b>Cambodia</b>	11,340,000	150	150	Nil	Negligible
<b>Indonesia</b>	200,000,000	5,00	50,000	Nil	Negligible
<b>Laos</b>	5,100,000	107	18	NA	Negligible
<b>Malaysia</b>	22,890,000	15,000	1,600,000	50,000	7.3%
<b>Myanmar</b>	46,500,000	2,000	2,500,000	400,000	5%
<b>Philippines</b>	76,000,000	2,000	24,000	12,000	Negligible
<b>Singapore</b>	3,160,000	90,000	2,17,000	Negligible	9.71%
<b>Thailand</b>	62,000,000	15,000	70,000	Nil	.07%
<b>Vietnam</b>	78,000,000	320	nil	10	Negligible

## BRUNEI

- 20.9. Most of the Indian community in Brunei migrated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the discovery of oil in 1929 and more prominently from 1950s onward when Brunei's economy started expanding. When Brunei introduced modern education in the 1950s and there was a sudden need for teachers, many of them went from India and today Bruneians still cherish fond and respectful memories of their former Indian teachers. Indian construction workers, who constitute a majority, went to Brunei in the last decade. An estimated 2500-3000 Indians are expatriates including doctors, engineers, teachers, businessmen and people in other vocations. The rest about 4000 are construction and other manual workers who are in Brunei on a relatively short-term basis. There are a good number of Indians in business like running mini-marts and small restaurants. Brunei is a manpower scarce country with late introduction of modern education. Indians working in Brunei, therefore, fill up human resources vacuum and have thus made an important economic contribution to Brunei. Social interaction between Indians and others including Bruneians and third country expatriates is limited. The community maintains a low profile despite its relatively significant size. It is well regarded for hard work and professionalism. Its main areas of settlement are Kuala Belait District, and the capital Bandar Seri Begawan.
- 20.10. The community makes conscious efforts to preserve its cultural identity and carry on with its cultural traditions. There are also a few churches and some small Hindu temples. Majority of the members are Muslim and for them, Brunei provides a more natural environment. However, the Hindus have no cultural or religious restrictions. Some expatriates are teaching Indian dances. Culturally, the largest segment of the Indian community comprises OF Tamils, both Muslims and

Hindus. Other sizeable groups are Malayalees, and people from Azamgarh/Jaunpur districts of UP. Prominent Indians in the academic field include Dr.PRamalingam, Member, Board of Education and Dr. P. N. Tandon, Member “Post Graduate Academic Research Regulations” Committee in the University of Brunei Darussalam.

- 20.11. There are two associations of Indians in Brunei, namely, Indian Association of Bandar Seri Begawan and the Indian Association of Kuala Belait.. Their activities are mainly of a cultural and social nature. These associations also organize functions on National Days, Diwali, Onam etc. Organization of a voluntary blood donation camp by the Indian Association at Bandar Seri Begawan for the last few years has emerged as a noteworthy activity. Both these associations bring out their small news bulletins, though not very regularly, for distribution among their members. The local national radio has a daily programme of film music in Hindi (and Nepali). There is also an Indian Chamber of Commerce. The major Indian commercial unit is a medium size construction company, Galfar, an India-Oman-Brunei joint venture, mainly controlled and run by Indians.

### **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

20.12. The demands and expectations of the Indian community in Brunei are as follows:-

- a) Assistance from the Government of India in consular matters like:
  - i) faster issuance of passports through quicker verification of passport particulars;
  - ii) issue of a larger passport booklet than the present 60-page one;
  - iii) issue of a new passport one and a half years before the expiry of its validity since regulations of many countries require that a passport should be valid for more than one year before they can issue residence permit/visa.
- b) Grant of dual citizenship.
- c) Voting rights in the respective home town constituencies even for the Indians permanent residing abroad.
- d) Introduction of Air India flights between Brunei and Chennai as majority of the Indian community (about 60%) belongs to Tamil Nadu.
- e) Establishment of an NRI Welfare Fund to cater to the welfare of the Indian citizens when they run into problems while staying in foreign countries. A 50-50 contribution, i.e., 50% of the funds to come from the Government of India and the 50% to be provided by the NRIs has been suggested.

### **CAMBODIA**

20.13. There is a small Indian community in Cambodia, numbering around 150. A majority of them are expatriates working on assignments. There is an Indian Association in Cambodia (IAC).

- 20.14. The conditions in Cambodia present an opportune time for the Indian Groups in Thailand to explore the possibilities of entering into the Cambodian market. The companies from India could also look at Cambodia more seriously. The tourism sector and hospitality industry would be of particular interest. There is a large potential in the tourism sector considering the fact that the tourist arrivals in Cambodia in the year 2000 increased five-fold to 200,000 from 40,000 in 1999 and are expected to increase further to one million in the next few years. This is, therefore, a good time to enter the hospitality sector, especially in the Siam Reap area.
- 20.15. Some of the public and private sector corporations, which have their offices or representatives in Bangkok could also consider expanding their areas of interest to Cambodia in view of a lot of activity going on in the infrastructure sector, particularly in the construction of roads and bridges all over the country.

## INDONESIA

- 20.16. Indian involvement in Indonesia long preceded the arrival of the Dutch. However, the Indians presently in the country are descendents of those who arrived largely in response to Western mercantilism from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the late 30s. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many unskilled or semi-skilled labourers of Tamil origin went to work on the Dutch and English plantations in East Sumatra. According to 1930 census, 67% of the Indian population was domiciled in Sumatra, while Java and Madura had about 18% of the population. Kalimantan and Sulavasi were settled by about 12% of Indians. The rest of the islands accounted for less than 3% of the Indians.
- 20.17. The members of the Indian Community, who came in the 60s and 70s invested mainly in textile industries. They played a prominent role in the export of Indonesian textile products. They expanded their activities during the economic boom seen by Indonesia. The economic recession, which took place, affected them slightly. However, the recovery has started which has opened up other avenues for Indian investment in textile, IT and other industries. The early identification of Sindhis with the textile business and Sikhs with the sports goods business continues to provide the overall framework of the economic position of Indians in Jakarta. A rather new development is the presence of Indians in the professions, such as medical, accounting and law.
- 20.18. The NRIs can acquire citizenship after fulfilling certain conditions prescribed under the immigration laws. There are no discriminatory policies. Indonesians of Indian origin have got the right to franchise in Indonesia.
- 20.19. Most of the Indians are still maintaining their link with India, having properties and bank accounts in India. The Indian community is culturally very active. They actively organise and participate in Indian cultural functions. However, they keep a low profile in the domestic politics. The Economic Association of Indonesia and India (ECAII) established by the Indian business community to promote trade relations is very active. There is an Indian bazaar called 'Pasar Bharu'. The Sindhi

community has their own association called 'Gandhi Seva Loka'. There is an Indian school called 'Gandhi Memorial International School'. There is also an India Club in which all the Indian community members actively participate.

- 20.20. The Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre at Jakarta organises various cultural programmes in Indonesia apart from imparting yoga, dance and tabla training. The Indian community is treated well and has integrated itself with the local population due to many centuries of cultural and historical relations. Places of religious worship like Churches, Gurudwaras and temple exist at Medan, Jakarta and Surabaya. In Medan alone, there are 5 Gurudwaras and over 10 temples. The Indian films are quite popular in Indonesia. Most of the Indian community mingles with the local Indonesians and participate in their social gatherings. The Indian Mission involves the local Indian community in programmes during the visits of VVIPs from India and cultural troupes performances. This gives the Indian community a sense of importance and link to India. They do not seem to have any major grievances as such.

## **LAO PDR**

- 20.21. The Indian community in Lao PDR is very small, numbering about 125 persons though the Indians numbered around 1000 prior to the Communist revolution in the country. Most of them are from Tamil Nadu. There are a few Sindhis as well. There are about 18 PIOs having acquired Lao citizenship. 70-80% of the community are Muslims. Main areas of settlement are Vientiane and Sekong.
- 20.22. The community has integrated itself very well with the local populace. Some of the Indian settlers in Lao have married local ladies. There seems to be a very good understanding between the Indian community and the people of Lao. Most the members of the Indian community keep a low profile and mainly focus on their day-to-day activity of their business. There is a local Masjid in Vientiane, which was built on land donated by a Hindu in the 1980s and is a regular meeting place for the Muslim members of the community in Lao.
- 20.23. The Indian expatriates in Lao are mostly professionals and well-educated whereas a large number of settlers are not so well-educated. Most of the settlers try to send their children to India for higher education. Indian experts in consultancy, particularly in the infrastructure related projects such as roads have been active during the last about 20 years in the country. Some of them are doing good business in jewellery, textiles and restaurants and others are engaged in petty trading. There are two Indian garment manufacturing companies and four Indian restaurants.

## **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

- 20.24. Some of the expectations of the Indian community are easy repatriation of their earnings to India, tax benefits for the income earned here, and less cumbersome customs procedures. According to the Indian Mission, they have not been approached for PIO Cards or with queries regarding dual nationality (which, in any case, is not permitted under local law).

## MALAYSIA

- 20.25. India's contacts with Malaya go back to the pre-Christian era. However, despite the great antiquity of the Indian overseas migration to Malaya and the debt of Malay culture to ancient India, there were seldom large number of Indians in Malaya in the pre-British period. The bulk of Indians came during British time as plantation workers. Nearly all the 1.6 million Indians at present in Malaysia are either themselves immigrants or descendents of recent immigrants.
- 20.26. Qualitatively speaking, there was a major difference between Indians who came to the Malay peninsula up to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and those who came in far larger numbers in the subsequent 130 years. The early arrivals were mainly merchants and traders; they were also Muslims. The early Malay states thrived because of entrepot trade. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a different class of Indians began to arrive. As British and European capitals became more and more involved in plantation agriculture – coffee first and rubber later – Indian labourers were brought into the peninsula with increasing rapidity and in greater numbers. The largest average annual flow of Indians into Malaya occurred during the period 1911-30, when more than 90,000 persons arrived in the country every year.
- 20.27. Indian ethnic community consists of mostly Tamils (80%), followed by Keralites, Andhrites, Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis and Gujaratis. Most Indians are settled in Penang state in north Malaysia, Perak in central Malaysia and the rest in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor state. Indian community's contribution to Malaysia's GDP is about 2% and its share in Malaysia's international trade is about 3%.
- 20.28. While a major portion of the Indian community is engaged in rubber and palm plantations, a small section is involved in services like police, railways and food business as well as in the legal and medical professions. Being engaged in plantation labour, the major chunk of Indian community belonging to the older generation was either illiterate or educated up to the primary school level. The present generation is, however, more literacy conscious.
- 20.29. Though education is free up-to secondary level, Indians are still not utilizing the opportunity. The number of Tamil schools in Malaysia has come down from 720 in 1963 to 526 in the year 2000 due to poor response towards Tamil studies. All this is due to the compulsions of employment requirements both within the country and overseas. A substantial majority of the Indian community has remained tied to the plantations and lagged behind in economic progress and education. As a result the per capita income of an Indian in Malaysia is below that of an average Malaysian.
- 20.30. There are some associations/groups formed due to their educational linkages with India such as: Malaysian Association of Indian University Graduates (MAIUG), Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) and Society of Medical Graduates of India and Malaysia (SOMGRIM). University of Malaysia has a department of Indian studies, which focuses almost exclusively on Indian languages and among them Tamil. There is a school run by the Laxmi Narain Temple, which teaches Hindi. Indian classical music and dances are promoted regularly by the Institutes,

such as, The Temple of Fine Arts, Sutra Dance Theatre, Shektra Dance Group and Tanji Kamla Dance Group. There are two Indian expatriates associations, namely, Bharat Club and Indian Expatriate Tooling Family of Malaysia. There are several associations of PIOs. There are two prominent Tamil dailies, namely, Tamil Nasion and Malaysia Nanban. While there is no ethnic Indian radio/TV channel, Astro and Mega channels transmit lot of Indian programmes.

- 20.31. The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) which was formed in 1946 is a main component of the ruling coalition National Front (Barisan Nasional) since 22 years and has got fourteen seats at present in the Malaysian Parliament (seven each in the two Houses), which include one Cabinet post, two Deputy Minister's posts and two Parliamentary Secretary's posts.
- 20.32. The Indian community maintains its linkages with India by means of pilgrimage, tourism and business trips apart from social commitments. They have close ties and interaction with their relatives in India. Community is taking part in infrastructure sector – construction of highways, ports, etc. They look towards India as a big market for Malaysia.
- 20.33. It is difficult to acquire Malaysian citizenship and PIOs/NRIs with continuous residence for 10-15 years and having a Malaysian spouse are considered selectively for Malaysian citizenship.
- 20.34. The religious worship and religious activities are permitted by the local authorities within certain guidelines. ICCR sponsored troupes visit Malaysia on a regular basis.

### **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

- 20.35. Malaysia continues to attract illegal work force and job racketeers based in India in collusion with their counterparts in Malaysia allure job aspirants to come to Malaysia on tourist/social visas after payment of hefty sums. Once in Malaysia, they are employed illegally mostly as labourers in plantation and construction sites on meagre wages and often apprehended by the Immigration authorities. Consular assistance is provided to them by the Indian Mission. Deportation of those arrested for overstay/illegal entry is often delayed due to the lack of sponsors to arrange their return tickets or their inability to pay fine. There are many cases of arbitrary termination of contracts and non-payment of salaries. Delays occur owing to the complex legal system and immigration laws.
- 20.36. Ethnic Community in Malaysia feels that there should not be any visa requirement for them. One of the main grievances of the Indian community is the hurdle of bureaucracy in business ventures and also the difficulties in transportation and hotel accommodation. They also feel that India has not exploited Malaysia's tourist potential.
- 20.37. There should be direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Thiruvananthapuram or Cochin.
- 20.38. **Culture** – Local institutes/centres expect financial and other support in the form of books/instruments, etc. from the Government of India for promoting Indian culture. There has been a demand from the community for setting up a cultural centre in Malaysia. During the visit of the



High Level Committee to Malaysia in July 2001, President of the Malaysian Indian Congress Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu had stated that the Malaysian Indian Congress proposed to establish a cultural centre for the community.

- 20.39. **Education** – The community have requested for establishment of a PIO University in India as a long-term solution for the educational needs of the children of the Indian Diaspora. As a temporary measure, they have represented for allocation of a definite number of seats in the professional institutions or colleges in India. For example, the medical colleges in India, which have a total of about 150,000 seats could offer 300 medical seats to the PIOs. There should be a 10-year programme to induct a large number of Malaysian PIOs for professional courses in institutions in India. Some of the Indian-Malaysian youth could be considered admission on self-financing basis. There should be more scholarships for the deserving ones.
- 20.40. Consideration should be given to the concept of twinning programmes or the setting up of branches of Indian educational institutes in Malaysia.
- 20.41. Malaysian authorities extend only limited recognition to Indian degrees. Global Organization of Persons of Indian Origin (GOPIO) have requested that the Government of India should seek the support of the Malaysian Government for an increase by the latter in the number of recognized degrees offered by the institutions in India for engineering, dentistry, pharmacy, animal husbandry, etc. in keeping with the spirit of South South cooperation.
- 20.42. **Entrepreneurial development** – The Government of India should frame a 10-year special “economic assistance policy” for the development of Malaysian PIO entrepreneurs. This should include preference for Malaysian PIOs in project offers, entrepreneurial support programmes and training and exposure to Malaysian PIO entrepreneurs in small and medium scale businesses and industries in India.

## MYANMAR

- 20.43. The origins of the present day Indian community in Myanmar can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century with the establishment of British rule. Britain ruled the country with the help of Indian soldiers, policemen and civil servants. Indian labour was extensively used for developing the infrastructure and for construction work. Indian farmers were taken there to cultivate virgin lands. Indian moneylenders and traders followed them to take advantage of the growing economy and the consequent prosperity. As a result, there was a large Indian community in Burma as Myanmar was then called, at the time of its independence. In the cities of Yangon (former Rangoon) and Mandalay, Indians were a dominant community. All important spheres of life, which included the civil services, education, professional services, trade and commerce were largely in the hands of the Indian community. While the community was generally perceived to be prosperous, a large segment of it belonged to the working class, which included the lower echelons of bureaucracy, domestic servants and labour, both in the agricultural and non-agricultural

sectors. Soon after Myanmar attained independence in January 1948, land was nationalised resulting in the expropriation of land holdings belonging to the Chettiyars, a community of prosperous money lenders who financed the traditional rice trade. This community was the first substantial group to leave Myanmar in the early fifties.

- 20.44. The 1962 military takeover was followed by a wholesale nationalization of business and a programme of Burmanisation, which meant replacing English by Burmese in all teaching establishments and in Government administration. This caused a large scale exodus of the prosperous, professional and educated segments of the Indian community – almost 320,000, between 1962 and 1964. What were left behind were the poor working class, which had nowhere to go, as well as some remnants of the trading community. The present Indian community in Myanmar is, by and large, composed of these people.
- 20.45. Due to lack of available data, the exact size of the Indian community in Myanmar is largely a matter of conjecture. According to estimates provided by the Embassy in Yangon, there are around 25 lakh persons of Indian origin in the country out of which only around 2000 hold Indian passports. The Embassy has estimated that around 13 lakhs among them are Muslims (which might include persons from Bangladesh), 8 lakh Hindu and 4 lakh Christian and Sikhs. It has to be emphasized that these are only guesstimates of people of Asian origin and it is difficult to say as to how many of them are of Indian origin today. Between 2 to 4 lakh persons of Indian origin are stateless, despite being third or fourth generation residents of Myanmar since they do not have any documents to prove their citizenship under the Burmese Citizenship Law of 1982. Our Embassy has been raising this issue with the local Government. As a result of its efforts, around 50,000 PIOs have been granted naturalization certificates which entitles them to certain rights. Their children would, however, be entitled to full citizenship. Over the last two years, the Myanmar Government has been granting full citizenship to PIOs in small batches.
- 20.46. While small communities of persons of Indian origin can be seen all over the country, including in the remote areas, major concentrations are in and around Yangon, Mandalay, Zeyawaddy, Kyauktaga, Mawlamyine and Patheingyi.
- 20.47. A majority of the present day Indian community in Myanmar is not well off. In the Yangon area, which has its largest concentration, most of the PIOs are engaged in jobs like domestic help, mechanics and construction workers, while others are engaged in petty trades. Only a handful of them are doing well in trade and business. In other cities, the PIOs are mainly engaged in petty trading. In the rural areas, the Indian community is engaged in farming. There is a large concentration of the Indian community, nearly one hundred thousand of them, in the Zeyawaddy and Kyautaga areas, who are engaged in farming. They are third or fourth generation descendents of Indians from Bihar who had been brought in by the British at the turn of the century. While few of these farmers are landowners, the rest of them are either sharecroppers or farm labourers. There are around 200 NRI families which came to Myanmar after economic liberalization began

in 1990. Most of them are located in Yangon and are engaged in export-import business or are employees of Indian or Singapore based companies.

- 20.48. On the educational front also, the Indian community has not been faring well, despite the fact that at one time, the faculty and alumni of Rangoon University was comprised mainly of Indians. The main reason for their poor performance in the educational sector is that, between 1964 and 1988, Indians were denied admission to universities and professional courses. As a result, there are hardly any Indian students in the universities, leading to a virtual extinction of a professional class in the Indian community.
- 20.49. Since social status in any society is linked to economic well-being, the Indian community in Myanmar does not, at present, enjoy much social or political clout. The present military government in Yangon does not permit any political activity. In the parliamentary elections of 1990, the Indian community did not play any role at all.
- 20.50. Since, as already mentioned above, most of the PIOs in Myanmar are near the bottom of the social pyramid, they have few or no prospects at present for any significant improvement. The various linguistic and religious groups among them still maintain their cultural identities. Most of the younger generation are more comfortable speaking Burmese. The *Arya Samaj* and the *Sanatan Dharma Sabha* are active in areas with large Hindu communities. However, there are no Indian political organisations because of the restrictions imposed by the military regime.
- 20.51. There are a large number of Hindu temples, mosques and gurudwaras in Myanmar. Practically in every town, the Indian community has established places of worship. The Indian community celebrates religious and cultural festivals and events with great fervour and enthusiasm. The older generations, in particular, are making a special endeavour to keep Indian religious traditions and languages alive by holding religious and language classes in temples, mosques and *gurudwaras*. The special festivals celebrated by the Hindu community include *Durga Puja* and *Navaratri, Holi, Janma Ashtami* , etc. The Muslim community gathers to mark the annual *Urs* of the Panch Peer held near Yangon. The *Urs* festivities spread over a five-day period. The death anniversary of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar is also observed every year with special programmes.
- 20.52. In some areas like Zeyawaddy and Kyautaga, there are whole villages inhabited entirely by PIOs from Bihar. In these places, the community is maintaining its distinctive linguistic and cultural identity. Their language and some of their customs date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In other places, while the older generation is maintaining a separate identity, younger persons are more comfortable with the local language and customs. There are increasing instances of inter-marriages between Indians and Myanmarese persons.
- 20.53. The Indian community's relations with the Myanmar Government and people are, by and large, cordial. Occasionally, senior government functionaries attend functions organised by the Indian community.

## **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

- 20.54. A vast majority of the PIOs in Myanmar are now poor and have no continuing family ties with India. Most of them were born in Myanmar and no longer have any contact with their relatives in India, though their emotional ties with India still exist. Since many of them are stateless, the Indian embassy has been authorized to issue restricted validity passports to them to facilitate their journey to India to meet their relatives. On an average, 500 persons avail of this facility every year.
- 20.55. The first and foremost expectation of those who have stayed back in Myanmar is that the Government of India would intercede on their behalf with the Myanmar Government to sort out some of the problems being faced by them, like the grant of citizenship, compensation for nationalized businesses, etc. There is a sense of anxiety among those sections of the community who have not been granted local citizenship, particularly because it affects their ability to own property, have higher education, get government jobs, etc. There has been practically no compensation for the land holdings nationalized in 1948, most of which belonged to Chettiyars from South India, as well as the private businesses nationalised in 1962. The Embassy and the Government of India have been taking up these issues with the Government of Myanmar.
- 20.56. The Indian community also looks up to India for its educational and cultural needs. They would like to send their children to India for higher education but are unable to do so for economic reasons. Our Embassy has been helping in a limited way by providing text books and books in Hindi and other Indian languages. It has also been supplying religious books, musical instruments, etc. to different socio-religious bodies. Ministry of Human Resource Development also gives annual grants to some cultural organisations in Myanmar. On the cultural front also, the Indian community expects India to help them in maintaining their cultural identity by providing them necessary support. Cultural troupes from India are always a special attraction for the Indian community.

## **THE PHILIPPINES**

- 20.57. Recent studies suggest remarkable Indic influence in languages, literature as well as social customs in the Philippines. Some of the pre-Islamic influences are more pronounced in the cultures of the Tausugs, the Maguindanaos and the Maranaos. In literature for instance, “Maharadia Lawana” – a Maranao epic based on the Ramayana story – is regarded as a historic legacy among the Maranao Muslims and is popularly recited and depicted through drama and dance forms. Another Maranao epic, “Raja Indrapatra”, is also of Indic origin. Interestingly, many traditional names of the Maranao Muslims are of Sanskrit origin and have not been Islamised, such as: Nagasura Madale, Gadia, Mitra, Laxamana, Radja, Salipada, and Sangkula.
- 20.58. It was the Seven-Year War in Europe that gave the British an excuse to mount a naval expedition against Manila. The expedition was fitted in India and it included, besides the British, a contingent of about 600 Indian sepoys and labourers, recruited from among the subjects of the Nawab of

Arcot in Madras. The British expeditionary force occupied Manila from 1762-64. The British occupation of Manila brought India and the Philippines in contact with each other in modern times. Similarly, it was the British annexation of Sindh and Punjab in 1843 and 1849 respectively that gave impetus to the Indian immigration in the Philippines. The prospects of gainful employment and business opportunities impelled the peasants from Punjab and Sindh to migrate to the USA and Canada. However, by the turn of the century after the American occupation of the Philippines in 1898, the Punjabis and Sindhis began to trickle into the country.

- 20.59. It may be noted that as against the exodus of the Indian indentured labour to the British colonies in South East Asia (and Africa), the Indians who went to the Philippines were free to select their destination and were not vulnerable to the unmitigated exploitation of the indentured system. Despite there being no discrimination or restrictions on Indian immigration into the Philippines, the Indians came to the Philippines only in trickles. They preferred to migrate to the USA and Canada. The Philippines was the last choice for them after Singapore and Hong Kong. Sindhi merchants were the first to come to the Philippines. The immigrants from Punjab came close behind the Sindhis to Manila to around 1902.. Quite often, the Indians would come to Hong Kong and from there to the Philippines without even knowing its name and existence, for economic reasons.
- 20.60. A Majority of the Indians in the Philippines are settled in Manila whereas some are present in other towns of the country as well. The Sindhi community in the Philippines is mainly engaged in trade and manufacturing whereas Punjabis are dealing in money lending. There are two Indian joint ventures in artificial yarn production. Indians have a dominant position in manufacturing and export of garments. There are many Gurudwaras and Hindu temples.
- 20.61. The traditional structure of the two main linguistic groups – the Sindhis and the Punjabis constituting the Indian community in the Philippines has gradually changed with a large number of highly educated civil servants from India coming to join the international organisations, such as International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Health Organizations (WHO) and a number of other UN agencies with regional offices in the Philippines. In addition, business and industry representatives from India engaged in joint ventures in the Philippines, or multinational Indian Corporations (Birlas, Kirloskars, Dalmia) have made Manila their business base in Asia.
- 20.62. There is a monthly magazine “Samachar” in English, which is run by the Sindhi community. We may mention among the prominent Indians the name of Prof. Ajit Singh Rye, who retired as Head of the Asian Centre, University of the Philippines. He has been in the Philippines for about 50 years and has an intellectual passion – both written and spoken – about India. Considering the comparatively small number of Indians in the Philippines, they have had some presence in the local politics. Mr. Ramon Bhagatsing, with Indian father and Filipino mother was Mayor of Manila during the Presidency of Mr. Marcos. Mrs. Laticia Shahani, sister of President Ramos is married to an Indian. She was a Senator. Her son, Ranjit Shahani is a Member of the House of Representatives.

## **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

20.63. The PIOs in the Philippines expect to have dual citizenship so that they can participate in the Indian elections. They also look forward to India for educational opportunities for their children. Some members of the Indian community have brought to the notice of the Indian Embassy problems faced by them in obtaining long-term/multi-entry visas and permanent residence status for their Indian spouses.

## **SINGAPORE**

20.64. The nucleus of the present Indian origin community in Singapore was formed by those, who were with Sir Stamford Raffles, the East India Company Officer, who arrived in Singapore in 1819 to establish a base there to arrange protection and provision for East India Co. ships carrying cargo between India and the region, especially China. They included 120 soldiers, several assistants and domestic servants. From 1825 to 1873 Singapore as a major penal colony in the region saw influx of convicts from India, who were utilised as virtual slave labour to clear swamps and jungles and for the construction of roads and buildings. From 1830 onwards, large immigrant groups, mainly Tamilians were brought in by the British as indentured labourers to work on the plantations, civic projects, government facilities such as harbour, transportation systems, naval military bases, etc. Also around this time began the immigration of Indian traders, from Sindhis to South Indian Muslims to the Chettiars attracted by the Singapore's rapidly increasing status as a trading centre. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indians had become Singapore's second largest community – about 13,000 – with bulk of them being labourers from Tamil Nadu. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Singapore continued to develop, more and more Indians arrived in search of employment opportunities in the white-collar sector.

20.65. Indian migration to Singapore also took place specially after the end of World War II and after India's partition. In the 50s fresh influxes from India virtually ceased as Singapore authorities passed increasingly restrictive ordinances to control immigration but about 50,000 Indians crossed over from Malaya seeking to escape the uncertain conditions generated by the emergency there. From the 60s immigration from India has reduced to an almost negligible level, primarily because of Singaporean authorities, decision to recruit most semi-skilled and unskilled labour from "traditional" sources of recruitment, wherein India did not figure.

20.66. In cultural terms, the Indian community is the most diverse of Singapore's ethnic communities. About 64% are of Tamil origin and Tamil is one of the four official languages together with Chinese, Malay and English. There is also a sizeable Punjabi, mainly Sikh community (about 7%), most of whom initially arrived in Singapore as members of the British army and police. The other distinct Indian communities are the Malayalis (about 8%), Sindhis (about 6%) and the Gujaratis (about 2%). Indians are also the most religiously diverse of Singapore's ethnic categories; an estimated 50-60% are Hindus, 20-30% Muslims, 12% Christians, 7% Sikhs and 1% Budhists.

- 20.67. Indians had a head start in the civil service and the professions because of their general proficiency in English. In the 60s and 70s, top posts in the Government, among civil services, judiciary, armed forces and educational institutions were largely held by Indians. Some people of Indian origin prominent in Singaporean politics and Government today include the new President, Mr. S.R. Nathan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Law, Prof. S. Jaykumar and Opposition leader Mr. J. B. Jeyaretnam. PIOs are also represented in all sectors of Singaporean economy and society to a greater extent than the Malays specially in the traditional professions such as medicine, law and academics. PIOs and NRIs are currently contributing significantly to the efforts of Singapore to become the new economy hub for the region. Even today, Singapore recruits majority of its construction workers from India. They have also kept Indian culture alive in Singapore. Part of Singapore's IT industry today is being fuelled by Indian expertise. There is also a significant Indian contribution to scientific research including in bio-technology and medicine.
- 20.68. The Indian community in Singapore, whether PIO or NRI, is largely content with its life and lifestyle. The Singaporean authorities accord equal treatment with regard to their basic demands, such as housing, schooling, recognition of cultural traditions, etc. The community is now overwhelmingly local born and linked to India primarily through the maintenance of cultural traditions, rather than by any nationalistic feelings. Those who were born and brought up in Singapore look upon themselves as Singaporeans rather than Indians and look to the West rather than to their ancestral birthplace for advancement of opportunities outside Singapore. There is an area called Little India, around Serangoon Road, which is almost completely populated by PIOs.
- 20.69. All Indian religions are represented in Singapore. There are quite a few gurudwaras, temples, churches and mosques as also religion based associations, such as, the Ramakrishna Mission. The media being government controlled, there are no privately owned radio or TV channels in Singapore. However, the government has allocated one radio and one TV channel exclusively for the Indian community. The programmes on these channels are primarily in Tamil, though other Indian languages are also represented, mainly through feature films. In addition, cable stations, such as Sun TV, Zee and Star World are broadcast locally. Cultural troupes sponsored by the ICCR stage various performances in Singapore on many occasions. Cultural organisations also frequently organize Indian cultural programmes with local talent. Most of the cultural institutions have their own auditoriums.

### **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

The demands and expectations of the Indian community in Singapore are as follows:-

- a) Educational facilities – The NRI community in Singapore would like an Indian school, with the CBSC syllabus, to be established there, as this would facilitate the adjustment of their children to the Indian school system, when they return to India.

- b) Culture – More sponsorship from Indian Missions abroad specially for cultural programme/ events not implemented through ICCR.
- c) Investment/Trade/Industry/S & T – Simplification of rules, development of infrastructure, less interference from trade and labour unions, a streamlined exit policy, genuine single window clearance, etc.
- d) Dual citizenship, removal of residence qualification and simplified procedure for acquisition or re-acquisition of Indian citizenship.
- e) Immigration and Consular matters – Simplification and streamlining of property acquisition regulations, avoidance of harassment by immigration officials, customs officials, FRRO, etc. Also some PIOs, who are permanent residents of Singapore, but hold third country citizenship raise the issue of dual citizenship.
- f) Illegal immigration – Immigration laws in Singapore being very strict, there is a persistent problem of illegal migrants mainly coming from Tamil Nadu into Singapore on fake passports, fake visas or illegal entry from Malaysia through boats. There is another category of persons, who deliberately choose, not to leave Singapore when their visas expire and go underground. Such persons are imprisoned for a period of a few months, caned and sent back to India. During the period of imprisonment, the Singapore Government gives the workers, temporary work permits and makes them earn the upkeep and for the cost of the air ticket provided by the Singapore authorities. Singapore authorities at times complain that their jails are clogged with Indian workers thereby causing a drain on their resources, as at any given time there are up to 300 Indians in Singapore jails. The Committee has been informed that the bottleneck is on the Singapore side, which insists that the workers earn their air passage before going back to India.
- g) Labour problems – These include delayed payment of wages, not paying the wages stipulated in the employment contract, ill-treatment, selling of passports by the employers, etc. One of the complaints often heard is that Indian software professions are underpaid. Besides their passports and original certificates are retained by the company making them virtually bonded workers. Disputes such as these are settled with the intervention of the Indian Mission with the companies concerned. A related problem is that the Indian professionals are paid less than their counterparts from other countries. This is more so for engineers. Indian degrees are not recognized by Singapore authorities nor is there any system by which an Indian can qualify an equivalent examination.
- h) Yet another problem is that of exploitation of Indian workers by Singaporean Indians and their Indian counterparts. The agents on both sides charge hefty sums and arrange Indian workers from India on the promise of getting them white-collar job in Singapore. These agents then keep these labourers in make-shift shanties and do not give them their wages for prolonged periods. The Indian Mission is learnt to have taken up the issue with the local authorities for finding out a solution.



- i) There are some members of the older generation, who would like to return to India to go back to their roots to escape post-retirement blues or simply because of the lower cost of living. Most of their savings are tied-up in their CPF. However, even after retirement, only partial CPF withdrawals are permitted and that too for specified purposes. Full withdrawal can be made only after surrendering Singaporean citizenship. In practice, this means that for the five years of continuous residence in India required to regain Indian citizenship and the additional time required by the authorities to formalize their status, they cannot have access to their CPF savings. Re-acquisition of Indian citizenship could be expedited in such cases to take advantage of the potential for substantial foreign exchange remittances to India in addition to alleviating their hardships.
- j) Most Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) in Singapore, desirous of employing Indian maid servants are put to a lot of inconvenience due to the existing procedures. Besides getting all the paperwork and the agreement between the employer and the employee attested at the Indian High Commission, Singapore Ministry of Manpower etc, they also have to go to the local Protector of Emigrants (POE) (Ministry of Labour) office in India, to deposit an amount equivalent to cost of one way air ticket to India. This is to enable the worker/maid servant to get the Emigration Clearance Not Required (ECNR) stamp on his/her passport. Depositing this amount involves, running around in the POE office, filling up challans, depositing the money in the bank, dealing with labour agents etc. Since the PIOs are not based in India, they have to make their relatives do the running around or employ agents, adding to their anxiety. Getting refund of this amount, on the conclusion of the contract of the maid servant, is also a very big hassle.
- k) While the PIOs in Singapore are agreeable to the payment of the cost of one way air ticket for their maid servants, they would like a simplified procedure. It has been suggested that they be allowed to deposit the required amount at the High Commission of India (HCI), Singapore which can issue a certificate to this effect. A copy of the certificate issued by the HCI can be forwarded to the concerned POE for their record. The maid servant can then be given the ECNR stamp at the airport itself on the strength of the HCI's letter. Similarly, on conclusion of the contract with the maid servant, the refund of the amount deposited can also be obtained at the HCI after the repatriation of the maid servant.
- l) The Indian labourers and maid servants in Singapore also often face problems in getting their compensation/insurance claims settled by their employers for injuries sustained by them during the course of their work. Despite assistance by the HCI, there are delays in settlement of such claims in case workers have travelled on forged passports or if the particulars of their next of kin are not mentioned in their passports and there is a legal problem in identifying them, etc.
- m) Suggestions for building linkages - There is a lot of potential for building economic cooperation between India and Singapore if the Indian community in Singapore which is

active in the field of joint ventures is encouraged further in their endeavours. It is to be noted that the First Global Indian Entrepreneurs' Conference of GOPIO was hosted by Singapore-Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Singapore in 1996. There is an IT park in Bangalore, phase I of which has achieved 100% occupancy and break-even status. With the initiation of phase II, the outlook for enhanced investment by Singapore is brighter now.

- 20.70. There is also a lot of potential for promoting tourism between Singapore and India by making use of the enterprise of the Indian community in Singapore.

## **THAILAND**

- 20.71. The links between the Indian sub-continent and Thailand have been documented by historians. Evidence of the presence of a sizeable number of Indians during the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods has been described by a number of Western travellers to the Thai court. Indian influence was noticeable in the religion and manners of the royalty. Indians were also seen to play an important part in trading activities.
- 20.72. The presence of Indians, who have settled in Thailand can be traced back to more than 100 years ago. Some Indians have been settled there for 3-4 generations. The earliest groups to have gone in sizeable numbers to Thailand appear to have been the Tamils. Phuket in Southern Thailand seems to have been the first area that experienced a spill over of Tamils from Penang and peninsular Malaysia. Most of them went there to participate in the cattle trade and the mining of precious stones, with service groups like the Chettiyars following them. As Bangkok grew in commercial importance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tamils also moved to Bangkok from Phuket, Penang and Singapore. Until 1940, the Bohras and Tamil Muslim Merchants from Pondicherry and Karaikal, all of whom were French subjects, were the only important businessmen in Thailand. After the first wave of Tamils and Bohra Muslims, came the Punjabis and the UP'ites.
- 20.73. Almost all the Indians in Thailand are found in urban centres. About 75% of them lives in Bangkok. The other urban centers, where Indians are found in sizeable numbers, include Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lampang – all in Northern Thailand. The largest component of the Indian community is that of Sikhs numbering around 30 to 35,000 followed by Hindus numbering between 15 to 18,000 originally from West Punjab, i.e., presently Pakistan. They are followed by persons from UP, Gujaratis, Marwaris, Maharashtrians, Sindhis and South Indians. A majority of the members of Indian community are well-established, mainly in the textile, real estate or gems and jewellery business. They have been playing a very active role in the economic development of Thailand.
- 20.74. A large number of religious and cultural organisations have been formed by the PIOs. Culturally the community is very active and organises various Indian cultural events and festivals from time to time. It has adapted and integrated itself very well with the local population and conditions. It does not take much interest in political activities, whether at the local or at the national level.

- 20.75. Presence of a large number of Indians in various International and UN organisations, multinational companies, banks, financial institutions as well as the progress that India has made specially in the field of information and communication technology has helped in giving India and the Indians in Thailand a progressive modern and forward looking image. The community is held in high esteem among the official and political circles as well as among the common people of Thailand. The setting up of the Aditya Birla Group of Industries around 32 years ago, Indo-Rama Group about 12 years ago and Thai Baroda Industries Ltd. about 7 years ago have contributed considerably to improving the image and prestige of the Indian community in local circles. Involvement of the Indian social and cultural organisations in charitable and philanthropic activities has also played a significant role in enhancing the standing of the Indian community. Some of the members of the community have also been decorated with honours and awards by the Thai Government.
- 20.76. Most of the PIOs in Thailand have obtained Thai citizenship. They are issued long-term visas by the Indian Mission in the country to enable them to visit India.
- 20.77. The PIOs in Thailand visit India frequently and remain in touch with their Motherland. There is also an increasing awareness among them about the educational facilities in India and a considerable number of them have been sending their children to India for studies, since most Indians parents prefer their children to retain their Indian cultural identity. By studying in India, the children can also acquire a good knowledge of English, which is useful later in the business and commercial sectors.
- 20.78. Consequent upon the down turn of the Thai economy since 1997, the Indian community has shown greater interest in investment in various projects in India. A large section of the community is extremely rich, doing very well in the textiles business and in real estate. A large number of them are interested in investing in India and can be useful in expanding our relations with Thailand in the economic and commercial fields, including the tourism sector. They can play a possible role in the BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – Economic Cooperation) and Mekong-Ganga River Valley Project.

### **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

- 20.79. No immigration problems are faced by the PIOs and NRIs, who hold valid travel documents. However, the number of Indians who either enter Thailand illegally or overstay are detained and thereafter deported to India after undergoing the prescribed punishment.
- 20.80. Our Embassy in Bangkok provides assistance in the resolution of problems of legal dues and death compensation through intervention with the local authorities. Most members of the Indian community are reportedly working with reputed Thai-Indian companies, or working on their own. No disputes pertaining to arbitrary termination of contract, non-payment or delay in payment, etc. have been reported to the Embassy in the recent past. Grievances and disputes arising out of employment of Indian nationals are settled through the courts and other concerned organisations of the Thai Government.

20.81. The following are some of the demands and expectations of the Diaspora in Thailand:

- a) The educational institutes in India should offer cost-effective facilities to the students from the region. These should have a realistic fee-structure for NRI students.
- b) Indian educational institutes do not recognize many internationally recognized certificates, which creates difficulties for students.
- c) Indian cultural centre should be set up in Thailand.
- d) There should be increased interaction between the Thai Board of Investment (BOI) and Indian Chambers of Commerce like the FICCI to promote understanding of markets. Turn-key projects, heavy equipment and IT have been identified as promising sectors for Indian exports.

## **VIETNAM**

20.82. It is reported that prior to the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, there existed a wealthy Indian Community of over 25,000 in South Vietnam with a large concentration in Ho Chi Minh City, most of the members hailing from Tamil Nadu or Bombay. They were engaged in petty trade – textiles, jewellery, general merchandize retailing and service professions. A number of Chettiars concentrated in Ho Chi Minh City were prosperous moneylenders, who had also invested in real estate. The Indian families, which are second/third generation migrants have integrated into Vietnamese society and are mainly engaged in petty trade or manual work. They have adapted well to local conditions. Many of them are able to speak the Vietnamese language. Some of them have married Vietnamese ladies. None of the Indians are known to have obtained the Vietnamese citizenship. Most of the Indians, who have arrived in Vietnam in the recent past, are working as professionals. They are well educated. Many of them are engineers and accountants. Most of them are representatives of Indian companies in Vietnam. There are virtually no unskilled workers in the Indian community. The main areas of settlement are Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

20.83. The Indian pharmaceutical companies have good presence in this country. The largest Indian investment is by the Nagarjuna Group in a sugar factory near Ho Chi Minh City. The KCP group has also set up a sugar plant in Southern Vietnam. Some other companies where they work are Godrej, Arihant Oil Mills, etc. Some work in multinational companies like Coca Cola, Pepsi, Lever Brother, Proctor and Gamble, etc. There are several Indian cuisine restaurants. The Indian businesses have set up an Indian Business Chamber (INCHAM). India has made investments in engineering, agricultural processing and plastic industries. There is also Vietnamese-India Friendship Association (VIFA), which also participates in India's Republic Day celebrations.

20.84. Due to the close political ties between India and Vietnam nurtured since the era of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh, there is a great warmth among the Vietnamese for

India. The Indians are, therefore, easily acceptable and are identified as traditional partners by the Vietnamese. Moreover, progress made by India in the recent few years in the fields of computer software and information technology and achievements like Green Revolution and White Revolution have also helped boost India's image in this country. The Indian education system and movies too are quite appreciated in this country.

- 20.85. The Indian community in Vietnam enjoys reasonably good economic status. The Indian Business Chamber (INCHAM) publishes a monthly newsletter on the activities of the Indian community in Vietnam and the major events in India including economic initiatives during the month. INCHAM has also been contributing towards building 10 low cost houses every year for the under-privileged people. A school situated in a province adjoining Hanoi has been adopted by the Indian community and the Indian Embassy. The school is called Indo-Vietnam Friendship School. An orphanage has been set up on the outskirts of Hanoi by Cimmco, a Birla company. M/s Ishan International Private Ltd. has been providing scholarships to 20 primary school students every year in a southern province of Vietnam. Its chairman, Mr. Shantanu Srivastava, who has been doing business in Vietnam for the last about eighteen years, has been accorded honorary Vietnamese citizenship in recognition of his contributions to Vietnam.
- 20.86. The Indian community is quite active culturally. Major Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. There are four Hindu Temples and a mosque, all located in Ho Chi Minh City. There also used to be a Gurudwara in Hanoi.
- 20.87. Under Cultural Exchange Programme, the ICCR sends cultural troupes to Vietnam every year.

### **Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora**

- 20.88. The Indian community generally expect the Indian authorities assistance in increasing their bilateral trade. They have requested for directing shipping services and air flights between India and Vietnam.

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