

Countries of the Gulf Region

Introduction



This chapter supplements the analysis of the Gulf Region contained in the preceding Chapter 3 and contains short notes on the various countries of the Gulf region. In addition to the GCC countries, we have included brief sketches on several others as well. India has been the source of supply of some of the expertise and equipment, and also a considerable portion of the equally essential skilled, semi-skilled, as well as manual workers that have been instrumental in transforming this region in a relatively short time into prosperous economies. This is an area where, consequent on the discovery and exploitation of hydrocarbons during the last three decades, the Indian presence has increased manifold. Our purpose in presenting this chapter has been to provide a panoramic view, however sketchy, of this region where the principal issues described and discussed in the main chapter have arisen. A statistical table has been added below in order to give a comparative idea of the size of the Indian Diaspora in this region in the year 2001, when viewed against the total population of these countries.

Table 4.1: The Indian Diaspora in the countries of the Gulf and its neighbouring regions

Countries	Population	PIOs	NRIs	Stateless	% age of Population
Bahrain	643,000	NIL	130,000	-	20.22
Iraq	23,000,000	50	60	-	Insignificant
Kuwait	2,254,000	1,000	294,000	-	12.80
Libya	5,800,000	400	12,000	-	Insignificant
Oman	2,300,000	1,000	311,000	-	13.52
Qatar	525,000	1,000	130,000	-	23.81
Saudi Arabia	21,500,000	NIL	1,500,000	-	6.90
U. A. E.	2,900,000	50,000	900,000	-	30.00
Yemen	7,676,000	100,000	9,000	-	0.62

Bahrain

- 4.2. With a population of 643,000 and a total area of 691 sq. kms, Bahrain is the smallest of the GCC States. This island country is relatively less endowed with hydrocarbon resources than most of its neighbours. Nevertheless, its proximity to them and its central location in the Gulf have enabled it to flourish by developing a sophisticated telecommunications centre and by venturing into offshore banking. Its other distinguishing features have been an enlightened and modern education policy and a moderate policy towards non-Islamic religions. The trade and commercial activity generated by the discovery of oil in 1932, and especially the oil boom years of the early 70s, brought home the need to discard its earlier conservative policy towards foreigners and, instead, to permit the entry of a large expatriate community. Currently, they constitute nearly 50% of the total population of Bahrain.
- 4.3. Indians are known to have gone to Bahrain in pursuit of trade as early as 3000 BC when their ships plied from the Harappan settlements to Oman and Bahrain, on their way to Mesopotamia. Though several Indian families have been residing in Bahrain for many decades, only a few of them have been granted local citizenship. Of the total population of 643,000 persons, Bahrainis number only 391,000. There are nearly 130,000 NRIs in the country, mostly from Kerala and other South Indian states. They are not only the island country's largest expatriate community, but they also constitute over 30% of its total workforce. Our unskilled and semiskilled workers, numbering 65-70% of the NRI population in Bahrain, are employed in the contracting, construction, maintenance and service sectors. They enjoy a good reputation in terms of their conduct, loyalty, higher productivity and non-involvement in local affairs. Being a large expatriate community, it is not surprising that some among them can encounter consular problems like a change in contractual terms, non-payment of wages when due, disputes relating to remuneration or working hours, etc. In the case of the relatively small number of housemaids, estimated at around eight to ten thousand, there are occasional complaints relating to maltreatment and odd cases of assault. However, the overall situation is not alarming, either in terms of numbers or frequency.
- 4.4. Those engaged in retail and other business activities deal in miscellaneous items like provisions, hardware, jewellery, electronics, etc. Others have taken up jobs as storekeepers, chemists, carpenters, barbers, etc. The economic boom of the early 70s, which led to the quadrupling of oil prices, opened up increasing avenues for job opportunities, not only for manual workers, but also for a discernible number of Indian doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants, bank executives, architects and many other such high grade professionals. There is hardly any established Bahraini business organisation that does not have a senior or middle level Indian employee playing an important role in its operations.
- 4.5. The Indian community has established in Bahrain as many as 43 socio-cultural organisations including a *Keraleeya Samajam*, as well as five schools. Most of the associations have been brought under the umbrella of the CCIA (Coordination Committee of Indian Associations) which has been able to present a united front and organise joint functions on occasions like Republic Day.

The Indian associations are actively engaged in projecting Indian culture in Bahrain. They have also been active in varied social work such as running specialised institutions for mentally retarded persons and spastic children, rendering assistance to geriatric wards, giving donations to Bahraini philanthropic organisations, etc. The Bahraini government is very appreciative of such contribution of the community. Its liberal attitude towards non-Muslims in observing their religious practices, provided this is done indoors, has enabled the NRIs to build and maintain five churches, a Hindu temple and three *gurudwaras* in the country.

Iraq

- 4.6. At the end of World War I, what is now Iraq was awarded to Britain as a 'mandated territory' by the League of Nations. The British administration thereupon started taking Indians to this country to build its railways and ports, establish its post and telegraph department, its inland water transport system and various other public utilities. Some Indians began to man minor posts in Iraq as clerks, technicians and accountants, both in the government as well as in private organisations.
- 4.7. It was only as late as 1932 that Iraq finally became independent. The end of World War II saw the arrival in the country of the descendants of Indian pilgrims who had gone there some decades earlier and stayed on. This new wave of Indians was gradually absorbed in the country and became Iraqi citizens. They are now mainly found in *Najaf* and *Kerbala*.
- 4.8. There was considerable excitement in Iraq when it was discovered at the end of the 1960s that the country had enormous hydrocarbon reserves, just waiting to be exploited. With the rise in oil prices in 1973, Iraq began an ambitious programme of modernisation. This meant undertaking a number of infrastructure projects in the transport and communications sector, and in health, education, housing, etc. Indian companies were successful in winning a number of civil construction contracts. Thousands of Indian workers arrived in Iraq for the execution of those projects. Their number peaked to nearly 80,000 by the late 1980s. By and large, they earned a good name for themselves and for India by their hard work, skill and competence. They also got on well with their Iraqi colleagues, both socially and professionally. Unfortunately, their number began to decline during the protracted Iran-Iraq war and finally came to an abrupt end after Desert Storm in 1990. Presently, the number of Indians in Iraq, excluding members of the Indian Embassy, is estimated to be only around 50. Almost all of them are temporary residents. They are either UN officials or businessmen in search of trading opportunities under the UN's Oil-for-Food Programme. There are five Indian students in the country on Iraqi Government scholarships and also some employees of a few Indian companies who have continued their presence in the country despite the UN sanctions. Due to Iraq's severe economic crisis resulting from those sanctions, pension and other claims filed by former Indian workers with the Iraqi authorities continue to remain pending. There is no likelihood of their clearance until the sanctions are lifted and the situation returns to normal again. One Indian citizen has landed in an Iraqi jail where he is undergoing a prison sentence.

- 4.9. An Indian Central School, which was run under the supervision of our Embassy in happier times, has remained closed since the beginning of the Gulf war. A *gurudwara* where, apart from weekly gatherings, special religious ceremonies used to be held in former years with the permission of the Iraqi authorities, still continues to function.

Kuwait

- 4.10. Out of nearly 2.2 million persons currently residing in Kuwait, as many as 65% are foreign nationals. The Indian Diaspora constitutes the single largest expatriate community in the country, accounting for almost 20% of the total resident population. All of them are NRIs as foreigners do not normally qualify for local citizenship. Only foreign women married to Kuwaiti nationals are the exception to this rule. The exact number of Kuwaiti PIOs is not known. But it has been estimated that there are currently only about a thousand women falling in this category.
- 4.11. Prior to the Iraqi invasion of the country in 1990, the number of PIOs in Kuwait was approximately 170,000. With the commencement of hostilities, those who could do so left immediately on their own. Those who could not had to be repatriated through Air India's repeated sorties into the country. Interestingly, the size of the Indian Diaspora in Kuwait has increased to more than 294,000 since the expulsion of Iraqi forces from the country.
- 4.12. As in other Gulf countries, NRIs need the sponsorship of a Kuwaiti national or organisation for admission to the country. Being foreign nationals, they are also not permitted to own a business or purchase immovable property in their own name. The small number of Indian businessmen that reside in the country have successfully conformed to these regulations by forging the necessary partnerships with local persons or entities. Mostly engaged in foodstuffs, jewellery, garments and motor parts trading, they are very well off. As for the remaining Indians in Kuwait, while a majority are unskilled and semi-skilled workers, there are among them a sizeable number of professionals like engineers, doctors, chartered accountants, scientists, software experts, management consultants and architects, as well as skilled workers like technicians and nurses. Only about 14,000 have jobs with various government departments. As many as 120,000 have gone there as domestic servants, a large number of whom are housemaids and governesses working with Kuwaiti families.
- 4.13. Various segments of the Indian community have organised their own cultural associations. There are about 100 of them, each based on common interests, place of origin, home language or religion. The various groups regularly organize cultural functions featuring either artists from India or local talent. These functions are held either in the big Indian Arts Circle Auditorium that the community as a whole has set up, or in the smaller auditorium of the Indian Embassy. In addition to projecting Indian culture in Kuwait, such functions help in acquainting the community's younger generation with their land of origin. Another welcome feature is that nine Indian Schools have been established in Kuwait with affiliation to the Central Board of Secondary Education.

The Indian Embassy has been authorised by the CBSE to supervise the conduct of its board examinations in Kuwait.

Libya

- 4.14. The Indian community in Libya was almost 40,000 strong in the mid-1980s. The number of PIOs in this country has now come down to only about 12,000. Most of the local Indians are skilled or semi-skilled workers and they are non-matriculantes. However, in addition to many doctors, paramedics and engineers, there are also several highly educated and qualified professors and academics in the faculties of the prestigious universities in Benghazi and Tripoli. A few professionals are also to be found in the oil sector.
- 4.15. The Indian community has set up in Libya an Indian Community Association that has chapters in the major centres of the country. The activities of the ICA include, *inter-alia*, promotion of Indian culture.

Oman

- 4.16. People-to-people contacts are believed to have existed between Indians and Omanis as early as the 7th century. Indian merchants were already undertaking commercial activities in Muscat in the 15th Century. At that time, the Indian community consisted essentially of traders and financiers from Kutch and Sindh. It was only in the 19th century that some Khojas also arrived here. They are presently well integrated in Oman, some of them even holding ministerial positions. Meanwhile, a few of the old Indian trading companies have developed into big business houses. The oldest Indian family in Oman has been in the country for at least eight generations.
- 4.17. Oman is possibly the only Arab country that is liberal in the grant of its citizenship to foreign nationals. Irrespective of his or her religion, any person who has lived in the country for at least 20 years is eligible to apply for citizenship. Almost a thousand Indians have so far been accorded such a status. Oman is also exceptional among the Gulf countries in the sense that the 'Basic Law of the State' which was promulgated in December 1996 guarantees freedom of worship to all its residents. Muscat has two Hindu temples where congregations are held regularly and *pujas* are performed every day. One of these two temples was apparently established over a hundred years ago. Two *gurdwaras* have been constructed recently in the labour camps. There are also seven churches in Oman to serve the various Christian sects that are found here.
- 4.18. Currently numbering around 311,000 persons out of Oman's total population of 2.3 million, the Indian community in this country constitutes a little less than 14% of its total population. It is the largest expatriate group in Oman, being 58% of its foreign population. The local Indian Diaspora is composed of almost equal numbers of unskilled (25%), semi-skilled (30%) and skilled (35%) workers. The balance (10%) is constituted of professionals such as engineers, bankers, financial experts and managers. There are almost 2,000 Indian doctors in the country. Unlike in other Gulf countries, the PIOs of Oman hold most of the middle and senior management positions in the

corporate sector, including a substantial number of posts of CEOs. Several Indians hold responsible positions in various ministries, government departments and public sector undertakings. Some Indians are employed in the local newspaper establishments, particularly the English language ones. Almost 80% of the Diaspora are from South India, with Kerala alone contributing as many as 60%. A large number of Indian companies are represented here, while several joint venture projects have already been completed or are in various stages of implementation.

- 4.19. The contributions of the Indian Diaspora in Oman to the development of the Omani community as a whole, and particularly so in the fields of commerce, healthcare, the construction industry and in communications is not only considerable but also widely acknowledged. The goodwill earned by it through its hard work and its commitment have added a very positive dimension to India's bilateral relationship with this country.
- 4.20. At the same time, the members of the Diaspora are conscious and proud of their cultural heritage and maintain very strong links with their motherland. This is manifested in the large number of cultural events organised by them, very often with the participation of visiting artists from India. As many as fourteen Indian schools have been established in the Sultanate, all of which follow the CBSE pattern, except one that is affiliated to the Kerala State Board. Several cinema halls in Muscat screen only Hindi and Malayalam films. Until 1994, the community had established no less than 25 separate Indian associations. They were based on linguistic or other such identities. With the promulgation of a decree by the government of Oman that only one social club would be permitted per community, it is now a happy consequence that the Indian Social Club is currently the only authorised representative of the Indian Diaspora in Oman. It organises cultural activities and also hosts visiting cultural troupes, besides undertaking philanthropic work. The community has always responded generously with financial and other contributions at times of national crisis, whether for earthquake relief in Gujarat or to alleviate the suffering of families of the Kargil martyrs.

Qatar

- 4.21. Most of the Gulf countries have a long history of Indian nationals having migrated there, usually for business, at least a couple of centuries ago. In the case of Qatar, however, the arrival there of numerous Indians seems to have started only around the mid-1970s. Again unlike its other neighbours in the region, Qatar has been a late starter in the commercial exploitation of its oil, as also in commencing its infrastructure and other development work with the help of labour and expertise from abroad. But the situation underwent a drastic change by the 1980s. The size of the Indian community began increasing rapidly and it is presently estimated as at least 130,000. According to a recent report of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the number of Indian expatriates may have even reached a figure of 170,000 which is almost a third of the total number of residents in the country. This sudden and increasing influx of our nationals into Qatar is due to the high reputation they have built for themselves in this country for their sincerity, hard work and expertise, as well as their law-abiding nature. Practically every local establishment,

whether governmental, business or industrial, employs Indians in various capacities. It seems more Indians would be recruited if the necessary work permits could be obtained from the Qatari Government!

- 4.22. A major chunk of the Indian community is engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled work, which means that it may be considered as belonging to the low or middle income-earning group. A much smaller number, around fifteen to twenty thousand, consists of professionals such as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants and bankers. Some of them have even become entrepreneurs. This segment of the Diaspora must be regarded as well off, considering that the annual remittances from Qatar to India are estimated to aggregate around Rs.1,200 crores.
- 4.23. The local Indian community had established two schools in Qatar nearly three decades ago, to meet the educational requirements of its children. Both of them were affiliated to the CBSE as well as the Kerala streams of education. As they became insufficient to meet the growing needs of the community, two more have been added since last year - the Shanthi Niketan Indian School and the Modern Indian School. To begin with, they cater only to younger children, but higher classes for study upto the secondary level will be progressively added. Another high school, which will be managed by the UAE-based Varkey Group, is likely to come up later this year.
- 4.24. An Indian Cultural Centre that functions under the aegis of the Indian Embassy, serves as a cultural nerve centre for the Indian community. It has over 50 Indian socio-cultural organisations affiliated to it. The ICC is not only popular among the Indian Diaspora, but its activities win favourable notice from other expatriate groups and also from the local population.

Saudi Arabia

- 4.25. Upto around the late 1960s, the “India connection” was the most significant political, economic and cultural link between the people of the Arabian Peninsula and the outside world. During that period, the Saudi economy was still under-developed and most of its people eked out a marginal existence. Indian goods and merchants frequently traversed the waters of the Indian Ocean, the Gulf and the Red Sea, while Indian towns like Hyderabad and Bombay provided congenial homes to Arab businessmen.
- 4.26. In the wake of the oil boom in the Saudi Kingdom, there was a steady increase in the employment of Indian nationals in that country. By 1983 the number of Indian workers had increased from a mere 15,000 in 1975 to 270,000. It further rose to 650,000 by 1990. After the Gulf crisis of that year, Yemeni workers, who were then a million strong lost their privileged status of not requiring a visa to enter the country or a sponsor to work in it. There was a mass exodus of Yemeni workers from the Kingdom. This resulted in Saudi employers recruiting Indians in large numbers to replace them. Consequently, the Indian Diaspora in this country, numbering about a million and half persons, is the largest Indian passport-holding community abroad.

- 4.27. The Indian Diaspora in Saudi Arabia may be divided into three broad categories. There are, firstly, professionals like doctors, engineers, chartered accountants and managers who are employed both with the government and the private sector on the basis of specific time-bound contracts. They constitute no more than 5% of the Indian community. A somewhat larger non-professional group of 10% includes white collar staff employed as clerks, secretaries, accountants, store keepers, booking clerks, etc. Finally, there is the remaining 85% consisting of organised labour and technicians working on project sites and industrial establishments, as well as on operations and maintenance jobs. Outside these three main groups, there is the unorganised labour which includes a small number of illegal entrants who are either working in the country without legal sponsors or who had come to the Kingdom on *Haj* or *Umrah* visas and then stayed on to work there. Periodically, the Saudi Government declares an amnesty to flush out and deport such illegal residents.
- 4.28. The Indian community in Saudi Arabia has been well received and accepted at all echelons of the Saudi society, as is evident from an almost three-fold growth in its numbers over the last decade or so. It is regarded as a community that is vital to the development of the country and to the proper operation and functioning of its infrastructure and its industrial and agricultural establishments. The Saudi employer is convinced that Indians give value for money, that they are loyal and disciplined, and that they are dedicated workers. They are seen as peaceful persons, not given to illegal activities and well adjusted to the constraints of Saudi social life. A major plus point in their favour is the fact that a negligible number of them get involved in criminal activities of any kind.
- 4.29. Most members of the Diaspora in Saudi Arabia have been able to adapt themselves to their environment and to create for themselves and their families a social and cultural life that gives them some satisfaction, though it is usually based narrowly on their Indian regional identity. They play a positive role in their community life, assuming responsibilities for organizing social and cultural events, or participating constructively in school activities. The economic and educational profile of the Indian community is directly linked to its professional composition. There is no role for the expatriates in the Saudi political system.
- 4.30. The community has set up a number of International Indian Schools in Riyadh, Jeddah, Damman, Jubail, Taif, Buraidah and Tabuk. Approximately 32,000 students attend these schools daily. Most of them follow the CBSE pattern and have facilities for teaching upto Class XII.
- 4.31. The Indians in Saudi Arabia have been remitting to India annually about US\$ four billion. This is the largest amount inward flow of foreign exchange from any single country. They have also been major contributors to the Resurgent India Bonds of 1998 and the India Millennium Deposits bonds of the year 2000. They responded generously to calls for assistance to the flood-affected people of Orissa last year and to the earthquake-affected people of Gujarat in January this year.

United Arab Emirates

- 4.32. After our extensive yet succinct *tour d'horizon* in the preceding pages, of many of the countries of the Gulf region, the Committee feels it may be adequate to summarise below the parallels that exist between the situation in the United Arab Emirates and its neighbouring countries. Simultaneously, an attempt will be made to show the differences that have set these Emirates apart from the rest of the region. We feel that an account on these lines would be able to indicate why the UAE has been so successful in mounting the express train of infrastructure and economic development and proceeding on its fast track in such a short time:
- (i) The bilateral contacts between the UAE and India date back to the early 19th century when pearls and dates from the former and spices, provisions and clothing from the latter, were energetically traded to their mutual advantage.
 - (ii) Although some Indian trading families began settling down in places like Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah around that time, it was only after World War- I that their numbers started increasing exponentially.
 - (iii) The various emirates that constitute the UAE do not permit naturalisation or permanent residence of foreign nationals in their territories.
 - (iv) Nevertheless, since the formation of the UAE in 1971, a small number of Indian emigrants have been permitted to hold UAE passports. They have been accorded some economic privileges, but they do not have any political role in the country.
 - (v) Only foreign wives of UAE nationals can aspire to local citizenship. But such a status would subsequently be forfeited in the event of divorce or the husband's death. Such an event would also render them into stateless persons if they happen to be PIOs, according to provisions contained in the Indian constitution and laws.
 - (vi) Unlike several of its regional neighbours, the UAE has not been endowed with limitless hydrocarbon resources to finance its economic development.
 - (vii) If it has been able to launch an ambitious programme of infrastructure and all-round economic development from the 1970s, this was the result of its imaginative schemes that began to fill its treasuries with the wherewithal for rapid development.
 - (viii) These schemes have already been referred to in Chapter 3. They included total exemption of income and other taxes, the setting up of sophisticated duty-free economic zones and, as the necessary infrastructure became available, the promotion of high-grade and exotic tourism with facilities that acted as a magnet to well-heeled persons from all over the world.
 - (ix) Massive infrastructure and development projects meant the induction of virtually tens of thousands of experts and labour – unskilled, semiskilled and skilled.

- (x) India was an obvious choice to become a preferred resource country to meet most of these requirements. The inflow of NRI professionals and workers increased steadily until it peaked at 1.2 million persons by 1996. As a rule, three fourths of our personnel in the UAE were labourers, with the unskilled workers being half the number. A majority went from the southern Indian states, especially from Kerala.
- (xi) Unlike the workers, the professionals (who constituted about a quarter of the total Indian community) were well paid and eagerly sought after, for their expertise and competence.
- (xii) The Indian Diaspora in the UAE has been able to establish a number of socio-cultural associations based on regional, linguistic or religious grounds. They meet frequently at various functions organised by them which, apart from enriching their own lives, are able to project Indian culture to a wider audience in their host country.
- (xiii) In addition to such activities, the community has established as many as 30 Indian schools following Indian curricular systems, for the benefit of its children. The local government's relatively liberal policy towards religions other than Islam has enabled the NRIs to build a few temples and gurudwaras where devotees can gather together in private for communal prayers. They have also been allowed to set up a number of cremation grounds, one or two of which have even been built at government expense, for the benefit of persons who are not permitted by their religion to bury their dead.
- (xiv) The Indian Diaspora maintains a close relationship with India. It has always responded generously with sizeable financial contributions at times of national crisis such as the earthquakes in Latur and Gujarat, the cyclone in Orissa and the Kargil crisis.
- (xv) With the progressive reduction in the volume of construction activity, the UAE government has begun to worry about the fact that three fourths of all the residents in the country are foreign nationals. It has become alarmed also that NRIs currently constitute over 50% of the country's expatriate workforce, followed by Pakistan with 22%. Accordingly, it has embarked on a policy of gradual '*emiratisation*' which is expected to result in local citizens forming at least 40% of the country's workforce by the year 2015.
- (xvi) Alarm bells have started ringing already, as employment opportunities in the UAE will progressively start becoming scarcer for our people. This is not likely to affect our professionals and highly qualified personnel in the knowledge-based sectors, at least not in the near future. Nevertheless, it is learned that many of them have already started exploring alternative opportunities for more secure employment in one or other of the western developed countries.

Yemen

- 4.33. The people of India and Yemen have had deep-rooted historical, cultural and trade relations since ancient times. But in order to appreciate the current situation of the Indian Diaspora in this country, it is necessary to review briefly the recent history of Yemen. The UK had incorporated the port town of Aden into the British Empire in 1839 as a sentinel to guard the southern entrance to the Red Sea. Britain administered it from the then Bombay Presidency. During that period, many Indians migrated to Aden - mainly from Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Britain finally withdrew from Aden in 1967, whereupon a leftist government took over and Aden and its adjoining areas came to be known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Pursuant to the new government's socialist policies, the private properties belonging to members of the Indian community began to be taken over by it. This resulted in the hasty departure from Aden of many PIOs, either for India or some other country. But a large number belonging to the Bohra, Khoja and Kachchi communities decided to remain behind and gradually became Yemeni citizens.
- 4.34. Meanwhile, the northern part of Yemen, had ended its internal civil strife and become the Yemen Arab Republic. In 1990 the two parts of Yemen decided to merge together and became the Republic of Yemen. Presently, out of a total population of over 17,6 million, the size of the Indian Diaspora in this country is estimated at a hundred thousand. Of them, only about 9,000 are NRIs. They and the PIOs are concentrated in and around the relatively bigger towns like Aden, Sana'a, Mukalla, Haraz, Seyun, Taiz, and Hodeidah. Many of the NRIs are academics and professionals. The majority consists of white-collar workers, nurses and paramedical staff, as well as skilled and semi-skilled workers and housemaids.
- 4.35. The Indian Embassy in Sana'a has installed a statue of Gandhiji in Aden's Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hall with the collaboration of the locally based Indian Association. A school named 'The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Indian Embassy School' is run in this hall for the benefit of the children of NRIs and PIOs. As many as ten Hindu and Parsi temples have survived in Aden since the time when it was still a British colony. But most of them are now objects of neglect because of the small size of their remaining congregations. As these properties are strategically located, they have become attractive targets for illegal encroachment and demolition. The Indian Ambassador in Sana'a is continuing his *démarches* with the Yemeni government to secure protection for these endangered sites. In cooperation with several western Ambassadors, he had succeeded last year in persuading the country's President to restore similarly endangered Church properties.
- 4.36. Various proposals have been made by our Embassy in Sana'a to provide better services to the Indian community in Yemen. These include the strengthening of its Consular Section; the opening of a branch of any nationalized Indian bank in Aden or Sana'a; and increased shipping services between Indian and Yemeni ports. These proposals are currently under Government's consideration.



