

Country Brief- OMAN



I Demographic features of Country

The country is bordering by the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea, between Oman and Saudi Arabia. It is mostly desert; hot and humid along west coast; temperate in western mountains affected by seasonal monsoon; extraordinarily hot, dry, harsh desert in east narrow coastal plain backed by flat-topped hills and rugged mountains; dissected upland desert plains in center slope into the desert interior of the Arabian Peninsula. The population is predominantly Arab; but also Afro-Arab, South Asians, Europeans. In 1970, QABOOS bin Said al-Said ousted his father and has ruled as sultan ever since. His extensive modernization program has opened the country to the outside world and has preserved a longstanding political and military relationship with the UK. Oman's moderate, independent foreign policy has sought to maintain good relations with all Middle Eastern countries.

Capital: Muscat

Population: 2,340,815 (2003 Census)

Age Structure: -14 years: 42.7% (male 675,423/female 648,963)

15-64 years: 54.7% (male 1,001,917/female 695,578)

65 years and over: 2.6% (male 44,300/female 36,048) (2006 est.)

Ethnic Group: Arab, Baluchi, South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi), African

Economy:

Oman is a middle-income economy in the Middle East with notable oil and gas resources, a substantial trade surplus, and low inflation. Work on a new liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility progressed in 2005 and will contribute to slightly higher oil and gas exports in 2006. Oman continues to liberalize its markets and joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in November 2000. To reduce unemployment and limit dependence on foreign labor, the government is encouraging the replacement of foreign expatriate workers with local workers. Training in information technology, business management, and English support this objective. Industrial development plans focus on gas resources, metal manufacturing, petrochemicals, and international transshipment ports. In 2005, Oman signed agreements with several foreign investors to boost oil reserves, build and operate a power plant, and develop a second mobile phone network in the country.

II Indian Diaspora

1 Demographic features of the Indian Diaspora

In Oman, Indian-born workers make up half of the country's 1 million overseas workers. Majority of Indians work long hours for low wages, without insurance coverage or legal protection. Most of the Indian workers in Oman have migrated from the south Indian states - Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka or come from

Maharashtra and the Punjab. Many are employed in construction workers. Over 30,000 workers from Tamil Nadu are employed in Oman under various categories

In Oman, trade union activity is effectively banned. Women domestic workers are especially vulnerable to physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Without rights in a foreign land and generally with no or poor Arab language skills, maids are often forced to work 16 hours a day or more and without even one day off per week.

2 Geographical features of the Diaspora

Not available will explore

3 Brief history of the Indian Diaspora

Historians have recorded that Indians were undertaking commercial activities in Muscat from the 15th Century. In the early day, the Indian Community consisted of traders and financiers from Gujarat (Kutch) and Sindh, including the Khojas (Lawatis) and the Hindu business community (Banias), who form the Hindu Mahajan Association. The oldest Indian family traces its history in Oman over eight generations.

Muscat has two Hindu Temples where Puja is performed daily; one of them is said to be over 100 years old. There are Gurudwaras within the precincts of companies and seven Churches, which meet the needs of various Christian groups from India. The Basic Law of the State, promulgated in December 1996, guarantees freedom of worship.

4 Profile of Indian Diaspora

There are around **350,000 Indians in Oman**, constituting the largest expatriate community in the country. Coming from all parts of India, they include skilled

workers and technicians, and professionals such as doctors, engineers, bankers, finance experts, managers, etc., with many holding middle and senior management positions in the corporate sector. Several Indians also hold responsible positions in Omani government departments and public undertakings: there are around 2000 Indian doctors working in the country.

The contribution of Indians to the development of Oman, particularly in the fields of commerce, healthcare, education, horticulture, finance, construction and communication is widely acknowledged. A number of Persons of Indian origin (PIO) have been granted Omani nationality, some of them being recipients of high awards of the Omani government.

5 Known Distinguished Diaspora

The community maintains close ties with India. Several NRIs/PIOs from Oman have set up businesses in India and many are involved in philanthropic and educational activities. Mr. Kanaksi Khimji and Dr. P Mohammed Ali, both prominent members of the Indian origin community in Oman, received the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award in January 2003 and January 2004 respectively.

6 Concerns and problems of Indian diaspora

- Issues of Illegal immigrants/absconder – due to various reasons, immigrants are not ready to leave the Oman which imposes penalty on them and considered Illegal immigrant , creating number of problems.
- Problems of non-payment by Insurance companies
- Lack of Postmortem facility in Muscat
- Duped by Omani' employers and recruitment Agents in India : need for service agreements duly attested by the Embassy of India
- Exploitation of house maids

Year	2003	2004	2005
Cases registered	127	153	87

Maids given Shelter	81	59	55
Maids repatriated	51	36	46

- Labour disputes
 - Non-payment of salary
 - Absence of proper basic amenities
 - Non-renewal of labour card and visa
 - Non-payment of gratuity on termination of job
 - Employer refusing to give permission to travel to India
 - Discouraging return of labour if find job unsuitable
 - Mislead by recruiting agents in India
- Full Implementation of Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojna

7 Diaspora Publications – not such publication

8 Diaspora Relations – to be explored

9 Local Law

In Oman, the Omanisation programme has been in operation since 1988, working toward replacing expatriates with trained Omani Personnel. Most companies have registered Omanisation plans. Since April 1998 a 'green card' has been awarded to companies that meet their Omanisation targets and comply with the eligibility criteria for labour relations. The names of these companies are published in the local press and they receive preferential treatment in their dealings with the Ministry. The Ministry has stipulated a fixed Omanisation ratio in six areas of the private sector. Transport, storage and communications are to have 60% Omanisation, finance; insurance and real estate 45%; industry 35%; hotels and restaurants 30%; wholesale or retail trading 20% and contracting 15%. This kind of policies will impact skilled and unskilled migration from India.

Bilateral Agreement by Indian government with Oman: Agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Promotion and Protection of Bilateral

Investments. It provides the requisite legal framework for facilitating trade and investment flows.

10 Major Diaspora Associations

There are 15 **Indian schools** in the Sultanate. All schools follow CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) pattern, except one, which is affiliated to the KSB (Kerala State Board).

Contact Person	Association' name	Phone	Address:
Dr. D. Thakur	Confederation of Indian Associations & Clubs (CICA)	464559	DTHAKUR@Y.NET.YE
Mr. PRAKASH	Kerala Club	73829956	
Mr. Sunil J. Olleri	Telugu Bharati	73802438	P.O. Box 543, Sana'a
Mr. Bharathi	Tamil Sangam	7928362	C/o Tcil Sana'a
Dr. D. Thakur	Indian Embassy Club	464559	DTHAKUR@Y.NET.YE
Mr. A.M. harief	Yemen Malayali Welfare Association	73811223	P.O. Box 3261, Sana'a
Dr. Jairam Singh	Indian Association, Aden	02-242837/244598	P.O. Box 5243, Aden
Mr. Jenny Antony	Malayali Samajam, Taiz	04-218486 (Sh. S.K.Nair)	P.O. Box 6212, Taiz
Dr. A.K. Sinha	Indian Association, Hodeidah	03-207801/219130	

There are not many associations as Omani law does not allow such practices. All above are very informal associations.