

SAUDI ARABIA



1. Country Brief with reference with its people

In 1902, ABD AL-AZIZ bin Abd al-Rahman Al Saud captured Riyadh and set out on a 30-year campaign to unify the Arabian Peninsula. A son of ABD AL-AZIZ rules the country today, and the country's Basic Law stipulates that the throne shall remain in the hands of the aging sons and grandsons of the kingdom's founder. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saudi Arabia accepted the Kuwaiti royal family and 400,000 refugees while allowing Western and Arab troops to deploy on its soil for the liberation of Kuwait the following year. The continuing presence of foreign troops on Saudi soil after Operation Desert Storm remained a source of tension between the royal family and the public until the US military's near-complete withdrawal to neighbouring Qatar in 2003. The first major terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia in several years, which occurred in May and November 2003, prompted renewed efforts on the part of the Saudi government to counter domestic terrorism and extremism, which also coincided with a slight upsurge in media freedom and announcement of government plans to phase in partial political representation. As part of this effort, the government permitted

elections - held nationwide from February through April 2005 - for half the members of 179 municipal councils. A burgeoning population, aquifer depletion, and an economy largely dependent on petroleum output and prices are all ongoing governmental concerns.

Saudi Arabia totally has 1,960,582 sq km space with it out of which 1,960,582 sq km is land and 0 sq km of water. It has a total population of 27,019,731 out of which 60 percent are in the working age group and 40 percent are dependent population, where 37 percent are in the age group of 0-14. However, the total population includes 5,576,076 non-nationals. The median age is 21.4 years. The population growth is estimated to be 2.18 percent in 2006. The net migration rate is (-) 4.94 migrants per thousand populations in the year 2006, which proves that the in-migration is higher than the out-migration.

The ethnic composition of Saudi Arabia is constituted of – 90 percent of Arabs and 10 percent of Afro-Asians. It is a 100 percent Muslim populated country.

The total number of expatriate workers in the Kingdom is about 7 million.

Nationality-wise break up of some of the larger expatriate groups is as follows:

Indians	1.42 million
Egyptians	1.00 million
Pakistanis	0.90 million
Bangladeshis	0.70 million
Filipinos	0.45 million
Indonesians	0.24 million

2. Nature and Demographic Profile of Indian Diaspora

Indians played a major role in the economic and social life of the Saudi people till around 35-40 years ago. This period pertained to the pre-oil boom when the Saudi economy was under developed and most of its people eked a marginal existence. The visits of Indian Haj vessels bringing in large quantities of food and thousands of relatively affluent pilgrims from India used to be a source of great

excitement among the local people. A number of Indian merchants flourished in the Kingdom controlling the cereals and spices trade.

In the wake of the oil boom, there was a steady increase in the employment of Indian nationals in Saudi Arabia. Thus by 1983 the number of Indian workers in Saudi Arabia had increased to 2,70,000 from a mere 15,000 in 1975; by 1990 the number had raised to 6,50,000. In the wake of the Gulf crises in 1990-91, with the mass exodus of the Yemeni workers from Saudi Arabia, the Saudi employers recruited Indians to replace them, taking the total number to 15 lakhs by the close of the 20th century. By the year 2005, the Indian community in Saudi Arabia is 14.25 lakhs, the largest Indian passport holding community abroad, constituting 20 percent of the expatriate community of Saudi Arabia, which is somewhere around 70 lakhs.

The Indian Diaspora in Saudi Arabia may be divided into three broad categories.

They are –

- Professionals like doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, scientists, technocrats, and managers who are employed both with the government and the private sectors on the basis of specific time-bound contracts, constituting around 10 percent of the Indian community.
- Non-professional group of 10 percent of the community, employed in white collar jobs such as clerks, secretaries, accountants, storekeepers, etc.
- The majority, i.e., 80 percent consisting of organised labour and technicians working on project sites and industrial establishments, as well as on operations and maintenance jobs. Besides, this group also includes a large number of unorganized labour, working as shepherds, agricultural farm labourers, housemaids, house-drivers etc.
- Apart from the above, there are also some illegal Indian migrants. However, periodically the Saudi Government deports such illegal residents.

More detailed sub-divisions are given below (information as provided by the Embassy of India at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

Sl.No.	Description of Category	Total Nos.	Percentage
1	Managers and Directors	1,210	0.09
2	Specialists in S &T and Social Sciences	42,964	3.47
3	Technocrats in S&T and Sociology	78,610	6.34
4	Clerical positions	3,543	0.29
5	Salesmen	50,685	4.09
6	Services	4,43,116	35.74
7	Agricultural labourers and Shepherds	27,441	2.21
8	Industrial/Chemical operators	53,652	4.33
9	Helpers in basic engineering	5,37,468	43.36
10	Others	997	0.08
Total		12,39,686	100.00

Indians are the preferred community in Saudi Arabia for their high quality of technical expertise and discipline and the capacity to adjust well with the Saudi social life. Indians have the reputation of peaceful being and not given to illegal activities.

The Indians in Saudi Arabia have been remitting to India annually around US \$ 3.5 billion. This is the largest amount of inward flow of foreign exchange from any single country. India is the 4th largest trading partner for Saudi Arabia. The value of two-way trade between the two countries in 2003-04 was more than US \$ 6.63 billion.

3. Known Distinguished Diaspora

(NIL - as reported by Indian Embassy at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

4. Concerns and Problems of Indian Diaspora

Since most of the diaspora in Saudi Arabia are workers, there may be a possibility of dispute with the sponsor regarding non-payment of wages, leave,

etc. in such cases they can contact the Community Welfare Wing to sort out their problems. The officials of the Community Welfare Wing try to sort their problems through discussions with the sponsor for an amicable settlement. If no agreement or settlement is reached through discussions with sponsor, the Indian nationals have to file the case with Labour Court, Jeddah. Community Welfare Wing provides free Interpreter service for most cases at Jeddah Labour Court.

The concerns and the problems in most of the Gulf region are similar. Most of the Indians in the Gulf were concerned about the education of their children. At the PBD 2006 held at Hyderabad, many of the delegates who have come from the Gulf region expressed their concern. They wanted their children to be given quota at the local colleges in India. There were also concerns about the exploitation of women in the Gulf region.

The death of Indian nationals at Saudi Arabia due to natural / unnatural reasons like traffic accident, work related accident, suicide, murder, etc, is to be intimated to (i) the nearest Police authorities, (ii) next of kin in India, and (iii) the nearest Indian Mission. The mortal remains can either be buried at Saudi Arabia or transported to India. If the dead body needs to be cremated, it has to be transported to India. There were complains about the delay in the procedure for repatriation of human remains at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2006.

5. Major Diaspora Associations

Saudi rules do not permit the setting up of associations. However, there are a number of literary and cultural groups have been set up in the main towns. These groups play a positive role in the community life, assuming responsibilities for organizing social and cultural events. Some of such groups are listed below with their e-mail addresses. Most of the groups/associations are situated at Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia.

1. Indian Doctors Forum (IDF): abidmoiz@hotmail.com
2. Indian Engineers Forum (IEF): aakhan35@hotmail.com

3. Hindustani Bazme-e-Urdu: abidmoiz@hotmail.com
4. Indian Tamil Fine Arts Association: sjay_seelan@yahoo.com
5. Tamil Cultural Society: asajja@lucent.com
6. Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys Association: wrizvi@stc.com.sa
7. Sahay Kala Vedi: wille64@hotmail.com
8. Banga Moitri: duttaswapan@hotmail.com
9. Pravasi Rehabilitation Centre: prcriyadh@hotmail.com
10. Riyadh Indian Friendship Association: rifamail@email.com
11. Sarga Keralam: -
12. Bharatiya Kala Kendrum Arts: emraju@hotmail.com
13. The Nightingales: suresh_cool@hotmail.com
14. Indian Arts Society: ramadury@sa.ibm.com
15. Riyadh Indian Association: arunk@lucent.com
16. Indian National Forum: ass_786@yahoo.com
17. Riyadh Tamil Sangam: sjay_seelan@yahoo.com
18. Riyadh Indian Cultural Congress: mt_ashraf@yahoo.com
19. Cultural Congress of India: kavungalar@hotmail.com
20. Telugu Kalaashetram: raom@sabic.com
21. World Malayalee council: wmcriyadh@yahoo.com

6. Bilateral Relations/Agreements between Saudi Arabia and India

Indo-Saudi relations are multifaceted and cordial. The 1950s and early 60s saw the visits of King Saud (1955) and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1956). Later, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the Kingdom in 1982. Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal visited India from 13-15 April 1981. In December 1994, the then Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, visited Saudi Arabia for the meeting of the Indo-Saudi Joint Commission. The visit of Dr. Manmohan Singh was followed by the visit to India of Prince Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, son of Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, in October 1996. Some other high level visits were those of the Saudi Petroleum Minister to India in December 1996, and the visit of the Saudi Haj Minister, in

December 1996, as Special Envoy of King Fahd. From the Indian side, Lok Sabha Speaker visited in October 1996. The then MOS for External Affairs, Shri Salim Sherwani visited Saudi Arabia in November 1997.

Bilateral Agreements

- The Joint Commission for Economic, Trade, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation (JCM) between India and Saudi Arabia was established in 1981 held its sixth session in Riyadh on April 12, 2005. Finance Minister Shri P. Chidambaram led a five member official delegation and a 19-member business delegation from FICCI and the Saudi side was led by Minister of Economy & Planning & Acting Minister of Commerce & Industry, Mr. Khaled M. Al-Gosaibi. During the visit, a MoU on the establishment of Joint Business Council between Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce & Industry (CSCCI) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) was signed.
- The Indo-Saudi Joint Business Council (JBC) was established in 1997 during the meeting of JCM held at New Delhi. FICCI signed a fresh MoU to establish the Joint Business Council between the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CSCCI) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry during the 6th Session of the JCM, held in Riyadh on April 12, 2005.
- India and Saudi Arabia concluded a Bilateral Accession Agreement on Saudi Arabia's accession to the WTO on 16 June 2004 at Geneva. The Agreement included agreed tariff schedules on items of export interest for India in the Saudi Arabian market as well as Saudi Arabia's market access commitments in services sectors of interest to India.
- The Council for Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Saudi Arabian Standards Organisation (SASO) has an ongoing programme of technical cooperation (POC) since June 1993.
- National Physical Laboratory has provided expertise and technology for two important SASO projects related to calibration and teleclock system.

- CSIR and the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for bilateral cooperation in 1997 and have an ongoing programme of cooperation, particularly in the field of space science, remote sensing and installation of internet.
- During the recent visit of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud the King of Saudi Arabia to India (Jan. 24-27, 2006) both countries signed Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement (BIPPA) and Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) on 25th January 2006.
- The bilateral economic and commercial relations between India and Saudi Arabia have grown substantially in the non-oil sector and both countries view each other as important economic partners in respect of investments, joint ventures, projects on technology transfer and joint venture projects in third countries.
- Cooperation in the field of manpower is an important dimension of the Indo-Saudi relationship. Approximately 1.5 million Indians are working in Saudi Arabia, around 85% of whom are in the blue-collar workers category. Remittances by Indian workers are estimated to be over US\$ 3 billion annually.
- India and Saudi Arabia cooperate in the field of training of agricultural experts. Indian experts were deputed to the Kingdom during 1993-98 to help Saudi scientists in the field of red palm weevil management. Saudi agricultural experts were also provided training in India in this field in 2001 at agricultural research facilities in New Delhi, Bangalore, Kasaragod and Kayamkulam.