

Gulf meets on turning Indian remittances into investments

Two investor meets will be held in the Gulf in November this year under an Indian government initiative to help overseas Indians channelise their remittances into actual investments back in the country.

The Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), a single window investment facilitation centre set up under a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), will hold these two meets in Dubai and Oman's capital Muscat.

These will be part of a series of investor meets the OIFC will be holding in places across the world with significant Indian population.

'A curtain-raiser event of these investor meets was held in Oman Sunday,' an official in the Indian embassy in Muscat told IANS.

'Two investor meets will be held in Muscat and Dubai in November,' he added.

There are over 4.8 million expatriate Indians across the six Gulf nations.

Under the new initiative, remittances by overseas Indians will be channelised into actual investments in sectors like real estate, assisted living, wealth management, education, healthcare and infrastructure, as against the current trend of such investments going into consumer spending.

Speaking at Sunday's meeting at Muscat, OIFC chief executive Harmit Singh Sethi said the figure of 30 million overseas Indians is projected to cross the 50 million mark in the near future, and added that the need to offer investment channels that meet the needs of these Indians has become all the more important.

The products on offer will have low-risk factor, provide moderate to high returns and have longer shelf life, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, India's Ambassador to Oman Anil Wadhwa said the two investor meets in the Gulf in November would showcase exclusive customized projects and products for the Indian diaspora in broad segments, targeted not only at big-ticket investments but also at the mid-level investors.

'Inflation and dipping (Bombay Stock Exchange's) Sensex of late have caused some consternation among economy watchers, but I am sure that it's a passing phase and that the strong fundamentals of the economy and sound fiscal policies of the government would ensure that readjustments in the economy take place sooner rather than later,' he said.

Stating that India's export figures were soaring and Indian companies were in the forefront of global merges and acquisitions, the ambassador said: 'However, to sustain the current level of economic growth, India will have to make massive investments in modernisation and development of its core infrastructure sectors, such as roads, bridges, power and telecom.'

Investments in healthcare and education were also needed to ensure that the country maintained an edge over others in terms of the quality of human resource, Wadhwa added.

According to the AT Kearney Confidence Index 2007, India has been the second most preferred destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) since 2005.

'As far as the Gulf region is concerned, we are aware that India receives sizeable remittances from this part of the world which basically goes into consumer spending,' Wadhwa said.

'One of the primary objectives of OIFC would be to convert these remittances into actual investments.'

Apart from Dubai and Muscat, the OIFC will be holding similar investor meets in Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, New York, San Francisco and Chicago in the US, London, Manchester and Birmingham in Britain, Durban in South Africa, Sydney and Melbourne in Australia and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.

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