

# “Together we can make Karnataka a prosperous State”

NRI Forum Karnataka Deputy Chairman Captain Ganesh Karnik tells **Anand Singh** about the objective, initiative and accomplishment of NRI Forum Karnataka.

**When did the government realise that there was a need to establish an NRI Forum?**

**GK:** Ever since the NDA came into power, we wanted to muster support from NRIs, as we were well aware about their role and potential in the development of the state. We wanted a platform to connect us with the Kannadigas living across the world. The Ministry of overseas affairs was in touch with the state government for the last 4-5 years but somehow things could not take shape. But CM had a special concern about profound concern to solve the problems of NRIs and to increase their involvement.

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Hence, the state expedited the process and that's how NRI Forum came into being.

**What are the key objectives of this forum?**

**GK:** Forum aims to take care of welfare activities of NRIs relating to their cultural and social requirements, remittances and investments, legal problems and assisting them to find jobs through a lawful recognised source. The forum facilitates the interaction of the Diaspora with the state in relation to issues concerning migration to other countries and also with problems they may face while abroad viz visa, salary, problem with the law of the land, false promises, and reverse migration.

**How far has the objective been achieved in the last two years?**

**GK:** A lot has been achieved and lot more remains to be achieved, but so far it has been satisfactory journey. I have travelled to many countries viz Gulf, Malaysia, Europe, US, China, Singapore etc for establishing links with the existing organisations like *Kannada Kotta*, *Karnataka Sanga*, *Kaonkani Kotta*, *Kullu Kotta* and also with several entrepreneur's associations. I have networked with them and maintained regular contacts. I have tried to promote NRI forum by listening to these associations and addressing their problems so that people become aware the forum.

**In this symbiotic relationship between the state and the Diaspora, what is your expectation from NRIs?**

**GK:** There has already been great amount of contribution from the NRIs. Last year when the world was reeling under recession, the remittances to state chequer grew by 40 per cent which amounts to not less than 42 billion dollars. But yes, we definitely expect them to think beyond remittances and look for better avenues of investment. We are promoting alternate investment to the amount of money they keep in bank - so that it could generate more money, more employment and several other internationally competitive activities.

**How do events like Advantage Karnataka Global Investors Meet help Forum's cause?**

**GK:** GIM will invite a lot of people at national and international level. It will be an ideal platform to increase visibility for NRI Forum and its activities. This event showcases wonderful opportunity to let people know about what this forum can do for them. In fact, during the promotion for this event I have gone around various places and have spoken at length regarding this forum and what it can do for people.

**What are your initiatives to increase social interaction between Karnataka and its Diaspora?**

**GK:** We are planning to call in youngsters of Karnataka origin who are not citizens of India to acknowledge them



about their culture. They will be exposed to their roots, their culture, art forms, coastal belt, and cuisine. We are also planning to make them stay with students at schools or colleges where they can exchange teaching methods. We are also looking at the possibility of addressing larger number of gathering like sending cultural troupes to Gulf, U.S etc for two day summit - to reach out to greater number of audience and make them aware of their roots.

**What about promoting culture of Karnataka abroad?**

**GK:** I personally feel that people do not need to be encouraged to promote their culture. When they go out they have a hunger in them to create an identity for themselves. We are lured to other countries, but once you go abroad, you seek to reconnect with your roots. They miss their culture, cuisine, etc. So they themselves take up several initiatives to keep their Indian connection alive and we assist them in whatever they require from our part. And as I said, we send cultural troupes to participate in events and summits to give a glimpse of our culture to the world.

**How do you encourage NRIs to adopt schools, animals and monuments (a programme initiated by the state government for all)?**

**GK:** We tell them that the society has been kind to them; they have gone out and prospered. They would be happy if they could make some contribution to the development of their roots. To foster growth in remote areas of Karnataka, we request the NRIs to do something for their respective village. The government has provided them several avenues to make their contribution. They can adopt school, orphanage, temples, sports ground etc. In fact we also invite them for a public-private partnership, where they can pay a part and the rest can be provided by the government. There has been very good response and many people have come forward and adopted schools, animals and monuments. The NRI community has taken up this initiative very positively.

**Can you tell us more about the very unique 'Skill and Knowledge Bank of Karnataka' initiated by the Forum?**



**GK:** Investment in terms of economic activities, charity work etc is thought over. I have been thinking of investment from a slightly different angle. Investment can be in terms of knowledge as a capital. Technocrats, scientists, doctors, advisors etc have gone abroad and did well. Over the years they have gained tremendous expertise and knowledge. These people usually come to India once or twice every year. I have been floating an idea to share their knowledge with next generation. While on their visit to their home in India, they can go to institutes for a couple of hours and talk to young students on things encompassing their area of expertise. For example, in Bangalore we have a world class Indian Institute of Science. So when an NRI scientist comes home he can go to IISc and share his area of research with the young scientists at the institute, which would enrich them academically. Moreover they can interact with young students here in India through email, can send CDs of their work and remain connected by other means of communication. This will be a great learning for the students.

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**As a Deputy Chairman of NRI Forum: Karnataka, What is your message to the Karnataka Diaspora?**

**GK:** I would like to greet them with a request that kindly come and join our noble cause of fuelling all round development in the state. I would request all my NRI fraternity that the country is poised for a paradigm shift and Karnataka is set to be the torchbearer. We should be acknowledged about what we can do more and where we are lacking. Together we can make Karnataka a prosperous state.

