

## PIOs make 'mini-world Parliament'

Diaspora connect: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State M.J. Akbar at the PIO-parliamentarian meet in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

India on Tuesday reached out to lawmakers of Indian origin spread across the world seeking support for its emerging status as a global power.

Speaking at the "First PIO Parliamentary Conference", External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj urged the legislators and political figures to consider what kind of contribution they could make for India's global ambition.

"This conference will be a mix of two dimensions on your present situation and past struggle, and what you can do to promote the emerging India in the global scene," she said.

### Global leaders

Introducing the theme of the event, Ms. Swaraj reminded the guests of the contribution of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in starting the annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and appreciated the political awareness of the people of Indian origin in various countries.

"A total of 141 lawmakers confirmed their attendance and 134 leaders have made to this event today despite massive weather disturbance [in the West]," Ms. Swaraj said.

The PIO Parliamentary forum was planned last year during a conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to connect the lawmakers of Indian origin with their ancestral land, the Minister said.

### Cultural link

Inaugurating the conference and highlighting the cultural link with the diaspora, Mr. Modi said, "Your ancestors had to leave India under various circumstances and that is why when you return to an Indian airport, you are reminded of your ties with this country. You have a desire to return to India and I understand your feelings very well. On the one hand, you have preserved Indian culture. On the other hand your people have excelled in sports, arts, cinema in the global platforms and have contributed to your adopted country's welfare," Mr. Modi said in Hindi.

He mentioned the presence of former Guyanese President Bharat Jagdeo, and noted that from Mauritius to Guyana, there were several Indian-origin individuals who had become leaders of their countries. "We have a mini-world Parliament in front of us today," Mr. Modi said.

"For enhancing our pride and dignity, you all deserve our appreciation," he said noting that India was experiencing aspirational and societal changes.

He noted that there was an "irreversible change" sweeping India, and urged the leaders to come forward to join hands.

Ms. Swaraj made special mention of the Indian community in Mauritius which had emerged as the leading player in the island nation. "Gandhiji inspired people in Mauritius to get education and increase political awareness and that is why after a few generations, they have achieved political leadership," she said congratulating the *girmityas* living abroad for their success.

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