

Indian Missions lean on AI-enabled videos to serve diaspora better

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Sarathi, an AI avatar, now tackles issues that Indians abroad deal with — passports, visas, OCI services, consular matters, police clearance and birth registration

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application with confidence, says an official, dressed in crisp formal, in a video posted by the Consulate General of India in Munich a few days ago.

It may all seem normal, but the official in the video is 'Sarathi', an AI avatar, tackling issues that Indians abroad deal with — passports, visas, OCI services, birth registration, police clearance, and consular matters — beaming one video at a time. Another such video focuses on the important documents required while applying for a passport. The initiative was launched a month ago.

Officials say, "The initiative seeks to educate and assist the diaspora in the region by leveraging artificial intelligence and modern digital communication tools."

Indicating that this is what advisories for Indians abroad would look like in the future, another official adds, "By utilising concise audio-visual content instead of traditional text-based advisories alone, the initiative makes information more accessible and easier to comprehend for a wider and more diverse audience."

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At the 11th Heads of Mission Conference held in April, themed around 'Reforming Indian Diplomacy for 2047', Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stressed on 3Ts — tourism, technology and trade — while addressing more than 180 Indian envoys who had been called to Delhi for the meet.

As per official sources, the initiative by the Munich mission came out of brainstorming sessions held at the meet, where it was observed that Indian missions were way behind in

leveraging technology towards extending their outreach to diaspora members, and the need for making the messaging “engaging, interactive and contemporary”.

“In pursuance of the citizen-centric governance approach consistently emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Consulate General of India, Munich, has launched an AI-enabled video awareness series featuring a virtual avatar named ‘Sarathi’,” said an official, adding, “the use of digital platforms facilitates broader dissemination of authentic consular information”.

Additionally, Indian missions abroad have also been promoting and integrating ecosystem tools like the government’s Bhashini AI platform to bridge the multilingual communication gap for diaspora citizens. The government’s official voice-first platform allows users to translate text, documents, and voice seamlessly across dozens of Indian and international languages.

In fact, over the past few years, several Indian missions — that serve a sizable diaspora population — have rolled out chatbots and digital assistants such as ‘Bharati’ and ‘Pramit’ to help users with their queries.

Among the first ones was the New York Consulate that serves 10 American states such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Vermont, comprising 2.5 million diaspora members. It deployed ‘Bharati’ on its website — a chatbot asking users: “Got any question?”, and then allowing for subject-specific queries to be selected.

The Consulate General of India in Dubai also has AI and chatbot technology integrated into its Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendra (PBSK) digital services, developed in collaboration with Zoho Corp, to handle frequent queries from Indian workers. Additionally, the official Indian Visa Su-Swagatam Mobile App has built-in chatbot support since 2024 for visa and e-FRRO services.

Even the Indian Embassy in Hungary, which also serves the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, has a built-in ‘Bharati’ chatbot on its website. The emphasis now is to channelise these platforms to multiply outreach, and also make their messaging more visual and interesting than just replying to standard text.

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