

Before wooing investors, spruce up embassies

Techie-turned-MP Janardhana Swamy says that the country does not have exact data on the number of NRIs

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How to lure investors to Bangalore? This is the question running in the minds of those busy with the preparations for the Global Investors Meet in June this year. While some have suggested promotional tours abroad, others have suggested discussions with foreign trade bodies, but namma US-returned software engineer and BJP MP (Chitradurga) Janardhana Swamy has a different one: Renovate the Indian embassy buildings and make them look classy!

Swamy, who is also a member of the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs, is of the contention that Indian embassy buildings are major image-spinners as they give a peek into the place where the investors would be pumping in their money.

Swamy recounted how he got the shock of his life when he took one of his US friends to the Indian embassy in the US a few months ago. "It was like I was taking my friend into an old bungalow, it was disappointing to see the pathetic condition in which the embassy was functioning. Before speaking about getting investments from NRIs, shouldn't we focus on developing these buildings?" he asked.

This former IISc techie has now recommended the Centre to ensure a speedy makeover for the embassies and to make special allocations for these in the coming budget.

NO NRI NUMBERS

Explaining his visit to US and other countries, the MP said, "It is surprising to know that neither the governments nor do embassies have an exact figure about NRIs. It is purely working on guess work.

While a few say it is just 50,000, others offer a figure of one lakh. None of our embassies have the exact number of NRIs. In addition, there are four to five websites hosted by the external affairs ministry which lack regular updates," he said.

NO QUESTIONS

Even as he is all set to celebrate the first anniversary of his political career, Janardhana Swamy has not asked a single question in Parliament. When Bangalore Mirror drew his attention towards the fact, he said, "It is generally not MPs but their PAs who ask questions most of the times after going through several newspapers. On many instances, MPs they themselves do not know what they are asking. I feel such practices of asking junk questions should be avoided."

The debutant MP, who maintains an attendance record of 54 out of the 57 days in parliamentary proceedings, has spoken twice on proper utilisation of renewable energy and providing amenities to farmers across the country, according to him.

"There is a voluminous dictionary which teaches you how to ask questions. It is a lengthy process and many young MPs have almost given up on asking questions and instead they appoint an experienced PA who has served at least three or four MPs previously," Swamy explained.

He feels asking questions does not really show your performance. Many of the questions that were raised were intended towards collection of data and a few even treat it like a kind of formality. "I feel that there is no need to ask such petty questions at Parliament and waste the valuable time. Instead, junk questions should be scrapped and a filter system should be set up to mark important and quality questions."