

## About the GCO / ISC-GW

Goans have been in Oman since the early 1970's. They have contributed significantly to the country's growth since Oman was, and still is, in a phase of developing and continuously updating its infrastructure. Currently it is estimated that around 15,000 Goans live in the Sultanate of Oman. Most of them stay in the capital area (Ruwi, Wadi Kabir, Seeb, Ghala, Al Khuwair), while a sizeable number are at the other two major cities of Sohar and Salalah. Quite a few work in the interior areas like Nizwa, Fahud, Marmul, Lekhwair, etc. A peace-loving people, Goans in Oman are known for their integrity, dependability, hard work, adaptability and sociability. And because Oman is probably the best country in the Gulf to live in, Goans are happy to be here and enjoy its homely, modern and safe environment.

Although the Goans in Oman, for many years, were trying to set up an association to promote fellowship and strengthen cultural and social ties, it was only in December 2007 that these efforts bore fruit. The impetus for this was the visit of the then Hon'ble Commissioner for NRI Affairs His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Faleiro.

After exploring various options, the Goan Community of Oman (GCO) was launched in May 2008 under the patronage of Saints Peter & Paul Church, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. Its membership was open to all Goans in Oman belonging to the Catholic Church parishes at Ruwi, Ghala, Sohar and Salalah. In keeping with the secular nature of Catholic organizations world over, the GCO welcomed non-Catholic Goans too to participate in its activities.

The founding members of the GCO, all of whom were inducted as the first Managing Committee included: Mr. Flynn de Lima, Mr. Celso Fernandes, Mr. Sebastian Almeida, Dr. Mario de Souza, Mr. Alan D'Costa, Mr. Raul de Oliveira Fernandes, Mr. Baltazar Fernandes, Mr. Savio Martyres, Mr. Anthony Lourenco, Mr. Navneet Kasbekar, Mrs. Revati Sanzgiri, Mr. Adam Sheikh, Mrs. Shaliny Henriques, Mrs. Jennifer Santimano, Mr. Bonny Vas, Mrs. Catherine Dias, Mrs. Leila de Souza, Mrs. Angela Almeida, Mrs. Matilda Mascarenhas, Mr. Savio Carvalho, Mr. Herman Estibeiro.

The October 2008 visit to Muscat of Most Rev. Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao, the Archbishop Patriarch of Goa, Daman and Diu was an occasion for Goans in Oman to meet at the parishes of Sts. Peter & Paul Church in Ruwi and Holy Spirit Church, Ghala. It is at that visit that His Grace the Archbishop launched the GCO Website, which was created to establish a database and facilitate communication amongst Goans in Oman.

Seeing how the GCO had gathered momentum and was functioning in such an enthusiastic and amicable manner, the Hon'ble Commissioner for NRI Affairs His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Faleiro requested it to host the 3rd Global Goan Convention in 2009. The then Ambassador of India to Oman His Excellency Mr. Anil Wadhwa was very supportive of the GCO and extended all facilities of the Indian Embassy to host this international meet of Goans. It was well attended by Goans resident in Oman and the neighbouring Gulf countries, and was a most successful event.

Over the years the GCO has continued to grow from strength to strength. The GCO website contains write-ups and photographs of various functions held annually: the St. Francis Xavier's feast, tiatr, football tournament, get-together for domestic workers, picnic, food festival, valentine/carnival ball, may queen ball, children's Christmas party, etc. The organization and turn out at each of these events gets better with each passing year thanks to the initiative, camaraderie and novel ideas evinced among current and new members of the GCO.

Successive GCO Presidents have been:

Mr. Flynn de Lima (2008 &ndash; 2010)

Mr. Alan D&rsquo;Costa (2011 &ndash; 2012)

Mr. Antonio Goes (2013 to 2014)

Mr.Savio Carvalho (2014 till date)

Because the GCO was functioning under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, some non-Christian Goans were reluctant to get actively involved in its activities. Further, with the growth of this informal organization it was becoming necessary to function in a formal manner as required by laws of the Sultanate of Oman. The GCO therefore decided to get itself registered as a Wing of the Indian Social Club, which is the only Indian organization recognized by the Oman&rsquo;s Ministry of Social Affairs for social and cultural activities related to the Indian community in Oman. The ISC being a secular body, the erstwhile spiritual activities of the GCO will now be looked after by the Goan representatives on the respective parish committees, and not by the ISC Goan Wing, which was inaugurated on 10th January 2014 under the guidance and support of founder convenor Mr. Ansalmo Antonio Goes.

May the ISC Goan Wing, the successor of the Goan Community of Oman (GCO), keep the Goan spirit and ethos flying high, and may we, as Goans, feel proud of its achievements!

DR. MARIO CARMO DE SOUZA

Founder Secretary, GCO

14th February 2014