

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1347
ANSWERED ON- 09/02/2024**

CAPACITY BUILDING

**1347. SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO
DR. JAYANTA KUMAR ROY
SHRI BHOLA SINGH**

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

(a) whether the Government has established any structured mechanism to enhance India's soft power across the globe and if so, the details thereof;

(b) the new initiatives of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) towards strengthening soft power along with the details of budgetary expenditure therefor;

(c) the details of the countries where these initiatives are running;

(d) whether the Government proposes to focus on capacity building to promote India's interest on the global stage; and

(e) if so, the steps taken / proposed to be taken for the same?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SMT. MEENAKSHI LEKHI)**

(a to e) Under the guidance of Ministry, ICCR has taken various new initiatives to develop cultural relations and create mutual understanding with other nations. It has made new forays in projecting India's democratic credentials, cuisine, art and craft, in addition to ongoing activities such as Yoga, Classical Dance, Music, etc. ICCR runs its cultural centers abroad which conduct regular activities to promote Indian culture and strengthen cultural exchanges with the partner countries. ICCR also regularly sponsors

cultural troupes to perform abroad and also hosts visiting cultural troupes from other countries. During 2023-24, ICCR organized Indo-Latin America Cultural Festival, International Dance and Music Festival, International Folk Dance Festival, for which cultural troupes from a large number of countries, including Chile, Ecuador, Columbia, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Cyprus, Cuba, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Croatia, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Panama, Romania and Iraq participated.

Some of the initiatives of ICCR include:

- (i) updating the existing A2A portal;**
- (ii) launching a new portal, Gyan Setu, for its scholarship programmes;**
- (iii) signing of MoUs with educational institutions and State Governments;**
- (iv) organizing Knowledge India Visitors Programme, inviting Heads of Departments in foreign universities teaching India related subjects;**
- (v) instituted Annapurna Certificate and awarded selected restaurants from USA, Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, Oman, Sweden and Mongolia for their outstanding contribution in promotion of Indian cuisine and culinary traditions abroad; and**
- (vi) hosting 138 young leaders from different countries under the Gen-Next Democracy Network Programme and 28 leaders from Buddhist countries under Buddha Bhoomi Vandan Yatra Programme during 2023-24.**

With a view to capacity building of partner countries, ICCR offers scholarship slots to foreign nationals under its 21 scholarship schemes. During 2023-24, 3775 such scholarship slots were offered. Currently, ICCR has deployed 17 Chairs on India Studies at various universities abroad. These include chairs in History, Economics, Political Science, Philosophy, Buddhist Studies, Tamil, Hindi, Sanskrit and Hindi-cum-Urdu.

The budget allocated to ICCR in the year 2023-24 is Rs. 345.21 crores.
