

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3214
ANSWERED ON:09.12.2009
IRREGULARITIES IN ICCR
Hazari Shri Maheshwar

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether gross irregularities have been committed by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in sending professionals of various fields abroad;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to make this process transparent and fair?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a) & (b) The ICCR-sponsored visit of one folk dance group, 'Mehek Punjab Di', in September 2005 is under investigation by CBI. No other irregularities have come to light subsequently.

(c) A Committee, comprising of experts in different fields of performing arts, has been constituted by the ICCR for the purpose of selecting artistes for empanelment with the Council. Other rules and regulations have also been put in place in order to ensure that a wide selection of artistes get an opportunity to travel abroad under the aegis of the Council. The only criterion for sending artistes/groups abroad is merit. Towards this end, the Council is increasingly involving its Regional Offices for their advice on the caliber of the artistes/groups being considered for tours abroad. A similar process is also followed for Professors and teachers deputed abroad to serve on Chairs of Indian Studies in various foreign Universities and in the Council's Cultural Centres abroad. In all cases, the process of selection has been made completely transparent and above-board by regularly involving experts and art critics from outside the Council in order to ensure the integrity and reliability of the procedure.