

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2316
TO BE ANSWERED ON 12/03/2026

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

#2316. SHRI SUBHASH BARALA
DR. BHAGWAT KARAD
SHRI KESRIDEVSINH JHALA
DR. DINESH SHARMA
SMT. KIRAN CHOUDHRY
SHRI DEEPAK PRAKASH

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

- (a) the assessment and impact of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship schemes on strengthening India's cultural diplomacy and global outreach including promotion of tribal cultures, folk arts and languages of Jharkhand;
- (b) the plans to increase the number of scholarship slots for foreign nationals in the coming academic years including in the Universities of Jharkhand;
- (c) whether Government is planning to expand the number of Chairs of Indian Studies in foreign universities to promote Indian languages and culture abroad;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the details of proposals to strengthen promotion of Hindi and other Indian languages abroad through publications and cultural collaborations?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI PABITRA MARGHERITA)

(a) The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) offers around 4000 scholarships annually to foreign students to pursue studies in around 134 Indian universities/institutions, including IIT Dhanbad in Jharkhand, in various mainstream disciplines, as well as in Indian music, dance, art, Yoga and Ayurveda. ICCR scholarships equip foreign students to pursue careers in various sectors after leaving India while also enabling them to experience and appreciate Indian art, heritage, and culture firsthand. This not only generates awareness about India but also fosters constituencies of goodwill for India in different countries of the world while also creating thousands of young, informal ambassadors of India abroad. Considering that more than 90% of ICCR scholarships are availed of by students from developing countries, ICCR's Scholarship programs position India as a global education hub and serve as a visible and impactful demonstration of India's strong commitment to South-South cooperation and capacity building.

With several ICCR Alumni serving in important positions in foreign countries, ICCR Scholarships also enhance India's global outreach and serve as a key instrument of India cultural diplomacy.

ICCR has signed an MoU with the Government of Jharkhand in September 2024 to promote culture of Jharkhand abroad and to facilitate cultural exchanges between Jharkhand Government and foreign countries. ICCR sponsored an 8-member Seraikella Chhau group to perform at the "Living Arts Cultural Festival" in Malaysia in October 2023. ICCR also hosted performances of the Musical Ensemble "Jivanmukta" from South Africa & "Laasya Art Academy" from Malaysia in Ranchi in February 2025 under ICCR's 10th India International Dance & Music Festival; and a Dance Ensemble "Tumar" from Kazakhstan under ICCR's 9th International Folk Festival in Netarhat in October 2025.

(b) The number of ICCR scholarship slots has increased by 400 this year. While ICCR offered a total of 4047 scholarships in the last academic year 2025-26, the number has increased to 4447 in the current academic year 2026-27. The increased scholarship slots also apply to IIT Dhanbad in Jharkhand.

(c to e) The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) promotes Indian languages and culture abroad by setting up Chairs of Indian Studies in foreign universities, in consultation with Indian Embassies and Consulates. At present, 9 such Chairs of Indian Studies are currently operational in foreign universities, out of which 6 Chairs teach Hindi and the remaining 3 teach Sanskrit, Tamil and Music, respectively. The deployment of 7 more Chairs to teach Hindi and an additional Chair in Sanskrit at various foreign Universities is under process. The ICCR Chairs are also mandated to promote an understanding of India, Indian civilisation and culture as part of their academic activities abroad. ICCR also publishes articles of foreign nationals and Indian writers in its bi-monthly magazine "Ganganachal" to promote Hindi worldwide.

Under its Grant-in-Aid Scheme, the Ministry of Culture provides grants to Indo-foreign friendship societies for promotion of cultural activities, including various events/ presentations in Hindi and other Indian languages.
