

Message from President, ICCR on occasion of ICCR FOUNDATION DAY 2021

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Greetings at the occasion of the Foundation Day of the ICCR. Today (i.e. 9th April) marks the completion of 71 years of the establishment of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). It is, therefore, very timely that we reflect and review our work in the light of our institutional mission.

The ICCR has been successfully striving to achieve the above objective of trying to make a significant value addition in India's Soft Power potential. ICCR has been working towards creating a sound understanding of Indian Culture in multiple ways. During the last over 6 years, ICCR has received a new thrust in harnessing the optimum Soft Power potential under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji. Hon'ble Prime Minister has shown keen interest to build onto India's 'soft' power strengths and personally chaired a meeting last year (13th July 2020) to review *ICCR's 'Past, Present and Future'*.

As such, visible 'systemic changes' have been introduced in alignment with PM Modi's vision of strengthening India's 'soft' power. This has been complemented by the introduction of many new initiatives. As the President of ICCR, it has been both a privilege and delight to have been closely associated with the birth of many such initiatives. The most notable among them is the policy decision to name all un-named ICCR Centers abroad as Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), as a tribute to the spiritual leader who was also modern India's first spiritual ambassador.

Other significant initiatives include the *celebration of 21st June as International Yoga Day*; institutionalization of *Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Memorial Oration* in observance of the World Culture Day on May 21; organizing *Destination India Conference and Seminar on Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*; launch of *Universalisation of Traditional Indian Knowledge Systems [UTIKS] Platform*, among others.

Further, and as part of ICCR Alumni Connect Programme, Indian Missions / Posts and Indian cultural centres abroad were asked to organize an International Video Blogging Contest on the theme "My impressions of India" or "What India means to me" to coincide with the celebrations of the Foundation Day of ICCR. This Video Blogging Contest was opened exclusively for foreign students who studied in India either on ICCR scholarship or under self-finance. The Council received entries from

33 countries and out of them, few entries have been selected for award and recognition to their performance.

Apart from these, many new initiatives are under the pipeline. ICCR is working on formation of Association of Alumni of Indian Institutions. It is preparing a database of all the students who have studied from Indian institutes. Inputs from the Missions have been received and are being consolidated in existing data of alumni. Associations of Alumni of Indian institutions are being formed in the respective countries through the Missions. It is my pleasure to share with you that out of the many such forums under contemplation in different countries, my recent visit to Uzbekistan saw the inauguration of the Uzbekistan Forum of the Alumni Association of Indian institutions.

On this Foundation Day of the Council, I take this opportunity to convey my greetings and to thank all the stakeholders, including the Indian missions and cultural centres abroad, the universities in India and abroad, the foreign students who are studying in India, the whole artist fraternity and all others who are directly or indirectly connected with ICCR on the occasion of the ICCR FOUNDATION DAY. I look forward to your continuous support to further strengthen the ICCR in its endeavours to become an important tool of India's soft power diplomacy.

JAI HIND !

9th April 2021

President, ICCR