



Promoting India's Culture through Foreign Students

For Prelims: Awards of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Indian Tourism Development Corporation, All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE).

For Mains: India's Soft power diplomacy, Functions of Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Why in News?

The [Indian Council for Cultural Relations \(ICCR\)](#) plans to expand **India's cultural footprint** globally by utilising the **experiences of foreign students studying in India**.

- This **"soft power diplomacy"** is meant to spread the India story when **students go back to their home countries**.

What are the Initiatives of ICCR To Expand India's Cultural Footprints?

- The ICCR will start **E-3 or Exit Engagement Evenings** with foreign students 3 to 4 months before they finish their courses in **various Central and State universities, institutes, and agricultural colleges of the country**.
 - After the engagement evenings, the students are sure to go back and promote **Indian heritage** and aspects of its unique culture.
- The engagements would also include visits to places of national importance. The ICCR has zeroed in on the [Khadi Commission](#), the [Indian Tourism Development Corporation](#), and the [Department of AYUSH](#) to hold these evenings with the students.
- The ICCR has also launched a website called the **India Alumni Portal in April 2022** as a platform to **connect with foreign students around the world who have studied in India**.

What is the Current Status of Foreign Students Enrolling in India?

- The number of foreign students enrolled in Indian higher education institutions was **48,035 in 2020-21, a marginal dip from 49,348 in 2019-20**, according to the latest [All India Survey on Higher Education \(AISHE\)](#) brought out by the Ministry of Education.
- People from more than **160 countries visit India** to study, with **Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the U.S., the UAE, Bhutan, Sudan, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Yemen** being the countries from which the majority of the students came.

What are the Functions of Indian Council for Cultural Relations?

- **About:**
 - The ICCR is an **autonomous organisation** of the Government of India under the Ministry of External Affairs.
 - It was established in **1950 with the aim of promoting Indian culture** and its **values abroad** and **fostering cultural exchanges between India and other countries**.
- **Functions:**

- Organising **cultural festivals, performances, exhibitions**, and lectures in India and abroad.
 - Granting **scholarships to foreign students** to study in India.
 - Offering courses in **Indian music, dance, yoga, and languages**.
 - ICCR has been assigned the responsibility of facilitating the celebration of the **International Day of Yoga** by Indian Missions/Posts abroad since 2015.
 - Collaborating with international organisations, cultural institutions, and foreign governments to promote cultural exchanges.
- **Awards:**
- Distinguished Indologist Award, World Sanskrit Award, Distinguished Alumni Award – Citation and Plaque and Gisela Bonn Award.

[Source: TH](#)

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