

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1842
ANSWERED ON:08.03.2006
PROMOTION OF INDIAN CULTURE ABROAD
Gandhi Smt. Maneka

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has posted any cultural attaches in its embassies;
- (b) if so, the manner in which the Government plans to increase awareness regarding Indian culture abroad;
- (c) whether the Government is aware of the difficulties being faced by the ISKON temples in Russia promoting Indian culture; and
- (d) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA)

a) Promotion of Indian culture and development of cultural interaction with the host country is an integral part of the activities of all Indian Missions abroad. All Heads of Indian Missions abroad actively promote awareness of Indian culture in their host countries. In addition, in every Mission, an officer is specifically designated to handle cultural work as part of his duties.

b) The Indian Council for Cultural Relations has established 18 Cultural Centres and 2 sub-Centres for the promotion of Indian culture abroad. The Council has an ambitious programme of activities including scholarships, organization of Indian cultural festivals, exchange of cultural troupes of performing artistes, organization of conferences, seminars, lectures and exhibitions, publication of cultural magazines and journals, exchange of distinguished visitors, dissemination of print & audio-visual material on Indian culture, including through a new revamped website, etc. The Government recognizes the importance of cultural diplomacy in the attainment of India's foreign policy objectives. It shall be the endeavour of the Government to further strengthen and expand the infrastructure & activities of Indian Cultural Centres abroad.

c) There are no restrictions on the practice and propagation of Indian culture in Russia. The ISKCON Temple in Moscow was functional from 1989 till June 2004 when it was moved to a new location in the city, with the consent of the Temple authorities. Subsequently, the Moscow Prosecutor General's Office issued a ruling that the relocation order for the ISKCON Temple was not legal. It is understood that ISKCON representatives are working with the Moscow City Government to find a solution to this property related issue.

d) The matter was taken up by the Government with the Russian authorities. Consequently, the matter has been referred to the Moscow City Government.