

CSIR Weekly Briefing: Cultural Connect

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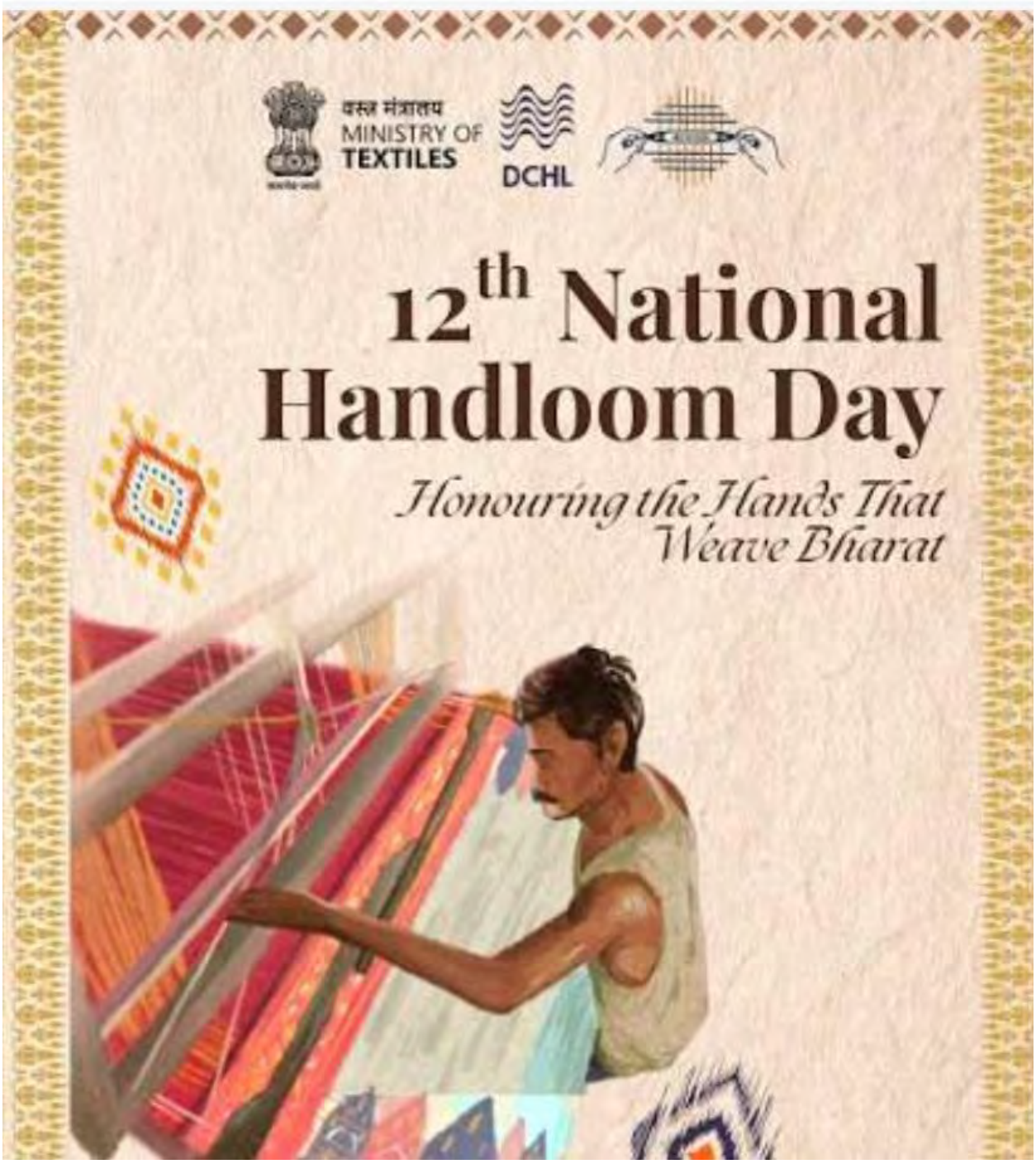
National Handloom Day: Preservation of Bharat's Living Textile Heritage



The Ministry of Textiles celebrated the 12th National Handloom Day on August 7th, 2026, with a national function held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC) in New Delhi to commemorate Bharat's rich handloom heritage and honour the contribution of the weaving community to the country's cultural and economic development.President Droupadi Murmu attended the event as the Chief Guest.The event was attended by recipients of the Sant Kabir Handloom Awards and National Handloom Awards, along with their family members, handloom

weavers from across the country, members of the Awards Selection Committee, representatives of the handloom sector, senior government officials, media personnel, and other distinguished guests.

National Handloom Day commemorates the launch of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905, which promoted local goods and encouraged self reliance. The occasion celebrates Bharat's weaving traditions and recognises the socio economic and cultural contribution of handloom workers. In 2026, the observance marks an important point in this journey. It reflects the growing relevance of handloom among contemporary consumers and its greater visibility in global markets. Bharat's handloom tradition has deep historical roots, with its earliest traces dating back to the Indus Valley Civilisation. Spinning and weaving find mention across the Rigveda, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The fine quality of Bhartiya cotton and silk is also documented in these texts and in the works of Kautilya. Over the centuries, weaving skills and techniques have been passed down from one generation to the next. These traditions have evolved through the distinctive practices of different regions across Bharat. The institution of National Handloom Day in 2015 gave this long-standing heritage a dedicated national platform. Bharat's handloom traditions remain rooted in regional fibres, techniques, motifs and generations of weaving knowledge. At the same time, the platforms on which these textiles are presented are expanding. Supported by government institutions and initiatives, regional weaving traditions are reaching new platforms.

Source: Press Information Bureau
Ministry of Textiles – 12th National Handloom Day announcement (Press Information Bureau)

"Worlds Within Cloth: New Orders of Woven Making"



Vastra Mantralaya (Ministry of Textiles, GoI) announced the exhibition “Worlds Within Cloth: New Orders of Woven Making” at the Rashtriya Hastkala Sangrahalaya evam Hastkala Akademi(National Crafts Museum & Hastkala Academy) in New Delhi. The exhibition was scheduled to open on 5th August 2026 and remained accessible to visitors from 6th to 19th August 2026. The initiative represented an important cultural intervention aimed at presenting Bharat’s rich textile and weaving traditions within a contemporary artistic and cultural framework.The exhibition was significant because it moved beyond the conventional understanding of handloom as merely an inherited craft tradition. Instead, it presented weaving as a living and evolving form of artistic expression, capable of responding to contemporary ideas, aesthetics and creative practices. By bringing traditional techniques and woven forms into a contemporary exhibition space, the initiative highlighted the continuing relevance of Bharat’s textile heritage in the changing cultural landscape.

Bharat possesses an exceptionally diverse weaving heritage, with different regions contributing distinctive techniques, materials, patterns, motifs and cultural meanings. Handloom traditions

have historically been closely connected with local communities, livelihoods, social identities and regional cultural expressions. The exhibition provided an opportunity to reinterpret these traditions through contemporary artistic perspectives, demonstrating that traditional craftsmanship can remain relevant while adapting to new forms of cultural production.The exhibition also contributed to the broader representation of Bharat's cultural identity through its textile traditions. Woven heritage functions as an important medium of cultural communication because textiles embody histories, aesthetic traditions, community knowledge and regional identities. Presenting these traditions through contemporary museum practices can therefore enhance their visibility among both domestic and international audiences. Source: Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Textiles
Worlds Within Cloth – National Crafts Museum exhibition (Press Information Bureau)

Bharat–Africa Cultural Connection: Africa Day 2026



The Africa Day 2026 celebrations, held on 5 August 2026, provided an important platform for highlighting the depth and diversity of the relationship between Bharat and the African continent. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered remarks during the celebrations, underscoring the significance of Africa in Bharat's contemporary foreign-policy and diplomatic engagement. The theme, *"Africa, Land of Rich Culture and Opportunities,"* placed cultural heritage and civilisational diversity alongside the wider opportunities associated with Bharat–

Africa cooperation. The event was significant because it demonstrated that the relationship between Bharat and Africa extends beyond conventional areas such as trade, investment, development cooperation and strategic partnerships. Culture, heritage, education and people-to-people relations constitute important foundations of this relationship. Africa's diverse civilisations, languages, artistic traditions, music, dance, literature and local knowledge systems provide substantial opportunities for cultural dialogue and mutual learning.Bharat's engagement with Africa has historically involved educational exchanges, scholarships, capacity-building programmes, cultural performances and institutional cooperation. Organisations such as the *Bharatiya Sanskritik Sambandh Parishad* (Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) have contributed to this process by facilitating cultural exchanges and promoting Bhartiya performing arts and traditions in African countries. African cultural traditions have increasingly found platforms in Bharat through festivals, academic interactions and diplomatic programmes.Africa and Bharat share extensive historical interactions across the *Hind Mahasagar*(Indian Ocean), including commercial, migratory and cultural exchanges. Contemporary diplomatic initiatives provide an opportunity to renew these connections through education, culture, heritage and people-to-people contact.Source: Ministry of External Affairs
EAM's remarks during Africa Day Celebrations – 5 August 2026 (Ministry of External Affairs)

Bharat Strengthens Multilateral Cultural Connectivity through BRICS 2026 Culture Track



Under Bharat's BRICS Chairship 2026, the Ministry of Culture advanced international cultural cooperation through a series of interconnected programmes in Bhopal, including the third BRICS Culture Working Group Meeting from 5th–6th August, the BRICS Cultural Festival from 6th–7th August, and the BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting from 7th–8th August. The initiatives brought together BRICS countries to strengthen cooperation in cultural heritage, creative and cultural industries, cultural exchange and people-to-people relations.

The BRICS Culture Working Group provided an institutional platform for dialogue on three broad priorities: creative economy, cultural and creative industries, copyright and artificial intelligence; protection and return of cultural heritage; and the relationship between culture, climate and sustainable development. The 2026 Culture Track built upon earlier meetings held virtually in April and in Varanasi in June.

Alongside the formal discussions, the BRICS Cultural Festival provided a platform for cultural expression through performing arts and artistic traditions. This complemented the institutional negotiations by creating opportunities for people-to-people engagement and the presentation of the cultural diversity of BRICS societies.

The broader BRICS cultural engagement also included the BRICS WAVES Bazaar 2026 in Mumbai, which connected the cultural sector with the international creative economy through cinema, audiovisual production, digital media, technology and creative industries. The initiative brought together international creators and industry stakeholders and facilitated new audiovisual partnerships.

Source : PIB
Press Information Bureau – India to Host Second BRICS Culture Working Group Meeting / BRICS Culture Track 2026 Schedule

Bharat–Azerbaijan: Screening of *Chak De! India* under Bharat Filmotsav



The Bharatiya Dootavas (Embassy of India), Baku, organised a free screening of *Chak De! India* on 31 July 2026 under the Bharat Filmotsav – Baku Evenings Series. The initiative represented an important form of Bharat's cultural outreach in Azerbaijan, using cinema to create an accessible platform for people-to-people engagement. The screening provided Azerbaijani audiences with an opportunity to experience a popular Bharatiya film and engage with themes of sport, identity, teamwork, determination and social cohesion.

The significance of the programme lay in its use of cinema as a cultural bridge. Rather than restricting bilateral engagement to official diplomatic meetings or government-to-government interactions, the Embassy created a public cultural space where audiences could interact with a Bharatiya cultural ethos through film. Cinema possesses a distinctive capacity to communicate cultural ideas because it combines storytelling, music, language, visual representation and social themes within a single medium. The film explores questions of collective identity, gender, teamwork, discipline and national belonging through the story of a women's hockey team. Presenting such cinema to an international audience allows viewers to encounter aspects of contemporary Bharatiya society and popular culture in an engaging format.

The Bharat Filmotsav – Baku Evenings Series also indicates an effort to institutionalize regular cultural programming rather than depending exclusively on occasional national-day celebrations. Film screenings can create repeated opportunities for cultural interaction and provide audiences with exposure to different dimensions of Bharatiya society.

Source: *Bharatiya Dootavas* (Embassy of India), Baku.
[Embassy of India, Baku — Chak De! India screening under Bharat Filmotsav]

Bharat–Guatemala: Bhartiya Cinema as Cultural Outreach



The *Bharatiya Dootavas* (Embassy of India), Guatemala, organised a screening of the Kannada-language film *Dollu* on 6th August 2026 for approximately 50 students. The programme represented an important dimension of Bharat's cultural outreach because it introduced young

Guatemalan audiences to a regional Bharatiya language and cinematic tradition rather than relying exclusively on mainstream Hindi-language cinema.

The choice of *Dollu* was particularly significant from the perspective of cultural diversity. Kannada cinema represents one of the many regional cultural expressions that together constitute Bharat's plural cultural landscape. By presenting a Kannada-language film to an international audience, the Embassy expanded the representation of Bharatiya culture beyond the more internationally familiar images associated with Hindi cinema.

Cinema offers an especially effective medium for such outreach because it brings together language, music, performance, visual culture, social practices and regional identity. Through a film, audiences can encounter cultural traditions within a broader narrative rather than through isolated displays. In the case of *Dollu*, the screening introduced students to a regional cultural expression through the audiovisual medium.

The participation of approximately 50 students also gave the initiative an educational character. Young audiences represent an important constituency for long-term cultural connectivity because their exposure to foreign cultures can influence future academic interests, professional relationships and people-to-people interaction.The programme is a form of grassroots Cultural Outreach. Instead of targeting only diplomats or specialised cultural audiences, the Embassy used cinema to create direct interaction with students in the host country. The event also demonstrated the importance of linguistic diversity in Bharat’s international cultural representation. Bharat's cultural identity is composed of multiple languages and regional traditions, and overseas outreach can become more representative when these diverse traditions are introduced internationally.

Source: Bharatiya Dootavas (Embassy of India), Guatemala.
Embassy of India, Guatemala — Dollu film screening

Bharat–Madagascar: Art and Knowledge Activities



The Bharatiya Dootavas (Embassy of India), Antananarivo, organised painting and quiz competitions on 7th August 2026 as part of activities leading up to Bharat's Independence Day. The programme provided an interactive platform through which participants could engage with aspects of Bharatiya history, heritage and national identity.

The significance of the initiative lay in its participatory nature. Rather than presenting culture exclusively through formal exhibitions or ceremonial events, the Embassy encouraged participants to actively engage with Bharatiya cultural and historical themes through artistic expression and knowledge-based activities.Painting competitions can create an especially accessible cultural environment because participants interpret cultural themes through their own creative perspectives. This transforms the audience from passive observers into active contributors. Similarly, quizzes provide an educational mechanism for encouraging participants to learn about the history, geography, heritage and cultural traditions of Bharat.

The combination of painting and quiz activities therefore created two complementary forms of engagement. Art encouraged creative participation, while the quiz encouraged knowledge acquisition. Together, they provided a multidimensional cultural experience.The programme was also significant because it was organised in the period preceding Independence Day. National commemorations frequently provide diplomatic missions with opportunities to introduce

elements of the home country's cultural identity to local audiences. However, the participatory format of the Madagascar initiative gave the celebration a broader community dimension.

Such programmes can be particularly valuable for younger audiences. Interactive cultural activities can generate curiosity and familiarity, potentially encouraging participants to explore Bharatiya history and culture beyond the immediate event.The initiative also illustrates the wider role of diplomatic missions in promoting cultural connectivity. Embassies are not only sites of political and diplomatic interaction; they can function as cultural contact zones where local communities, diaspora groups and representatives of the home country interact.

Source: *Bharatiya Dootavas* (Embassy of India), Antananarivo.
Embassy of India, Antananarivo — Painting and Quiz Competitions

Bharat–Thailand: Madhubani Painting and Traditional Art Outreach



The *Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra* (Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre—SVCC), *Bharatiya Dootavas* (Embassy of India), Bangkok, promoted a Madhubani Painting Workshop for participants in Thailand during August 2026. The initiative introduced participants to one of Bharat's distinctive traditional artistic traditions and created an opportunity for direct engagement with folk art.Madhubani painting, associated particularly with Bihar and the Mithila region, represents an important component of Bharat's diverse artistic heritage. The tradition is characterised by distinctive motifs, patterns and narrative imagery and is closely connected with the social and cultural life of the region.

The international presentation of Madhubani art is important because it broadens the representation of Bharatiya culture beyond the classical traditions that are more commonly associated with international cultural programmes. Folk and regional art traditions provide an opportunity for overseas audiences to encounter the diversity of Bharat's cultural landscape.The workshop format was especially significant. Participants were not simply invited to view finished Madhubani paintings; they were introduced to the process of creating the artwork. This distinction is important for understanding contemporary Cultural Outreach. Observation creates exposure, whereas participation can create familiarity and experiential understanding.

By learning elements of Madhubani painting, participants in Thailand could engage directly with an artistic tradition originating from a particular region of Bharat. Such engagement can encourage greater appreciation of the relationship between art, community, history and cultural identity.The initiative also demonstrates the role of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre as an institutional platform for overseas cultural engagement. Cultural centres attached to Bharatiya diplomatic missions can provide sustained spaces for teaching, workshops and cultural interaction rather than limiting outreach to occasional festivals.

Source: Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra (Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre), Bangkok. SVCC Bangkok — Madhubani Painting Workshop

Bharat–Croatia: Sanskrit and Civilisational Dialogue in Dubrovnik



An important Bharat–Croatia Cultural Connect initiative took place in Dubrovnik from 3rd-8th August 2026, where an ICCR-associated academic programme focused on Sanskrit, Bharatiya epics and civilisational dialogue. The programme provided an international platform for scholars and Indologists to engage with Bharat's classical intellectual traditions and examine the continuing relevance of Sanskrit literature and knowledge systems in contemporary academic discourse.The programme was particularly important because it extended Bharat's Cultural Outreach beyond conventional forms such as music, dance, cinema and festivals. Sanskrit represents an intellectual and knowledge-based dimension of cultural engagement, providing international scholars with an opportunity to encounter Bharat through its classical textual traditions.

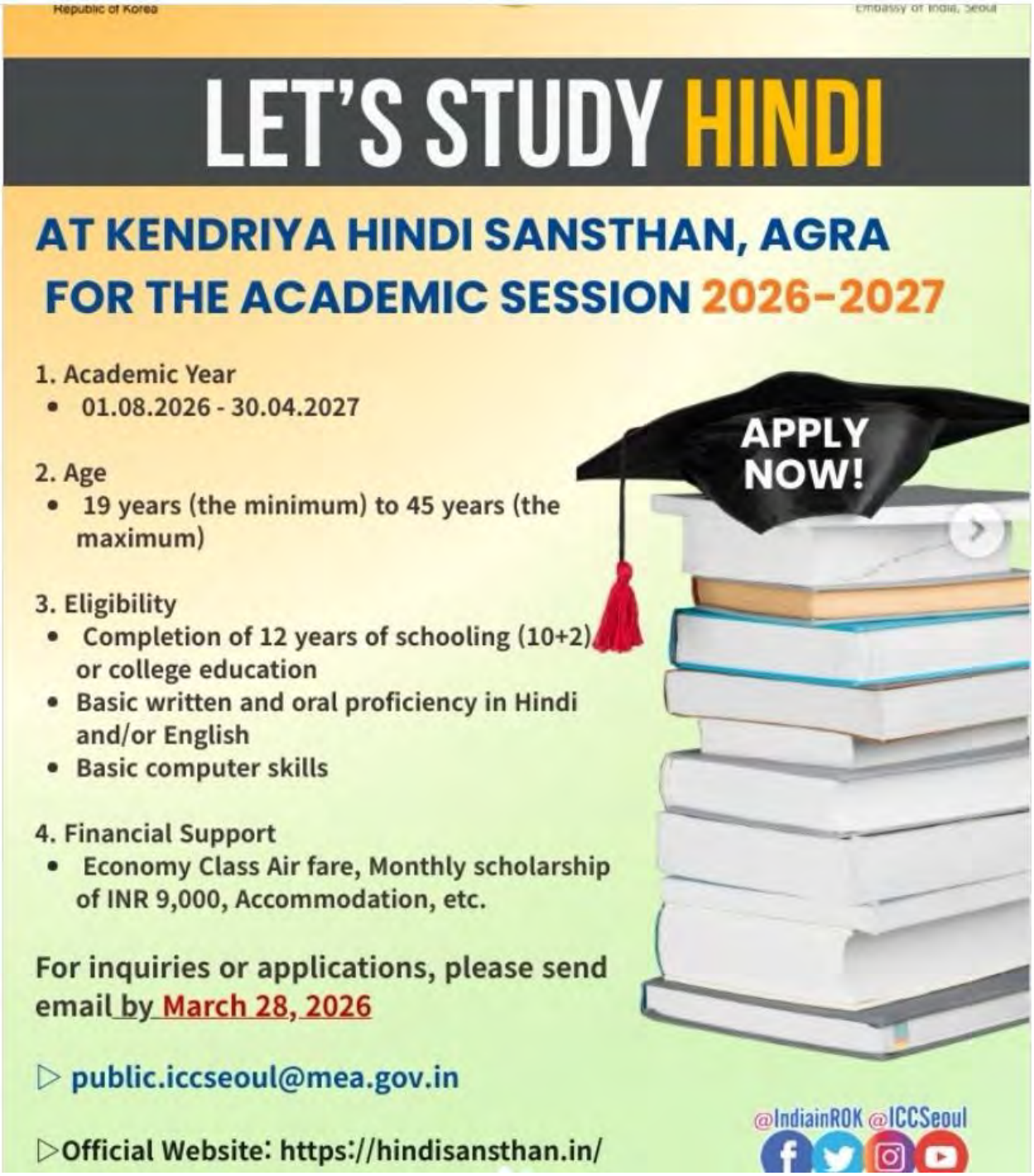
Sanskrit has historically served as an important language of philosophy, literature, linguistics, aesthetics and knowledge traditions. Academic engagement with Sanskrit can therefore provide international scholars with a deeper understanding of Bharatiya intellectual history.The Dubrovnik programme also strengthened the academic component of Bharat–Croatia cultural relations. Programmes involving scholars and researchers can generate opportunities for comparative research, translation, teaching and international academic cooperation. Unlike short-term cultural events, academic exchanges can establish relationships that continue beyond the duration of a particular programme.

This dimension is especially relevant to Cultural Outreach because knowledge networks can have a long-term impact. Scholars who develop expertise in Sanskrit or Bharatiya literature may subsequently teach these subjects, undertake research, translate texts or introduce Bharatiya

intellectual traditions to wider academic audiences.The programme therefore represented a movement from cultural exposure towards knowledge-based engagement. Instead of presenting Bharatiya civilisation merely through performance or visual representation, the initiative encouraged participants to engage with its textual and intellectual foundations.The focus on Bharatiya epics further broadened the cultural dimension by connecting literature with civilisational narratives and historical memory. Such engagement can contribute to comparative understanding between European and South Asian intellectual traditions.The programme therefore contributed to a deeper form of Bharat–Croatia connectivity by positioning Sanskrit and classical knowledge traditions as resources for international academic dialogue.

Source: Bharatiya Sanskritik Sambandh Parishad (Indian Council for Cultural Relations—ICCR).
ICCR — Sanskrit and Civilisational Dialogue Programme

Bharat–Korea: Hindi as an Instrument of Cultural Connectivity



The *Bharatiya Dootavas* (Embassy of India), Seoul, publicised the Hindi Scholarship Programme for the academic year 2026–27, with the programme commencing on 1st August 2026. The initiative represented an important dimension of Bharat's educational and cultural outreach in South Korea by promoting the study of the Hindi language among eligible students. Language represents one of the most enduring mechanisms of cultural connectivity because it allows people to engage with another society through its own literary and intellectual traditions.

In this context, promoting Hindi in South Korea extends beyond the acquisition of linguistic skills. Students who learn Hindi can gain greater access to Bharatiya literature, poetry, cinema, philosophy, history and contemporary cultural expression.

The programme therefore created a potential long-term foundation for Bharat–South Korea people-to-people relations. While festivals and cultural performances can provide immediate exposure, language education requires sustained engagement. Students must spend considerable time studying the language, and this process can generate deeper familiarity with Bharatiya society.The involvement of the Bharatiya Sanskritik Sambandh Parishad (Indian Council for Cultural Relations—ICCR) and Bharatiya diplomatic institutions is also significant. Institutionalised scholarship programmes allow Cultural Outreach to move beyond occasional events towards longer-term educational relationships.

The scholarship support, including financial assistance, airfare and accommodation for eligible scholars, further increased the accessibility of the programme. Such support can encourage students who might otherwise face financial barriers to pursue the study of Hindi and Bharatiya cultural traditions. The programme also has implications for academic and professional networks. Students who acquire advanced knowledge of Hindi may later contribute to teaching, translation, research, publishing and cultural activities. They can potentially become intermediaries between Bharatiya and Korean academic and cultural communities.

Source: Bharatiya Dootavas (Embassy of India), Seoul.
Embassy of India, Seoul — Hindi Scholarship Programme 2026–27

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