

# CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

## School of Research Based Learning & Competition

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#### ECO-EDUCATIONAL HUB



- It is developed by the **CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI)**.
- It provides a direct interface between **scientific knowledge and public engagement**, by making it accessible through experiential and interactive learning.
- **Features of the Eco-Educational Hub:**
  - **PAaVan Path (Plants and Associated Vegetations for Appreciating Nature):** It is an interpretive heritage trail. The trail takes visitors through curated plant collections representing diverse **ecological regions and associated vegetation**.
  - **Vibhav Enclave:** It is a **Threatened Plants of India Garden** provides a dedicated space for **rare, endangered and threatened plant species**.
    - It promotes awareness about biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, climate change and the need to conserve plant genetic resources.
  - **Bhairav Enclave:** State Plants of India Garden brings together **officially designated State Plants of States and Union Territories**, presenting their ecological, cultural and symbolic significance.

#### WHAT IS THE MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATE (MDR)?

- It is the **fee charged to a merchant for accepting a digital payment**.



- When a customer pays a business digitally, multiple **parties may be involved** in completing that transaction.
- Depending on the payment mode, these may include the **merchant, payment gateway or payment aggregator, acquiring bank, issuing bank, card network or payment network**, and other payment infrastructure participants.

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- MDR is part of the commercial structure that supports this payment acceptance chain.
- For a merchant, MDR is best understood as a **cost of accepting a particular type of payment**.
- When a customer makes a payment, the **merchant** usually **receives the transaction amount after deduction of MDR**.
- The MDR fees **cover a variety of costs**, including:
  - **Payment processor fee:** These fees are **charged by payment processors** (companies that handle transactions between merchants and banks like Razorpay) for their services.
  - **Interchange fee:** These are fees **charged by card issuers (banks)** to merchants for processing transactions.
  - **Assessment fee:** These are fees **charged by card networks (like Visa, RuPay and Mastercard)** to merchants for using their payment processing services.
  - **Markup fee:** These are fees that are divided among the different entities involved in the transaction.
  - **Additional fees:** Some payment processors may charge additional fees for **services like fraud prevention, chargeback handling**, and customer support.
- **Merchants** must **consider these fees** as part of **managing their business costs** and setting their prices.
- MDR charges are **automatically deducted from the merchant's account** at the time of settling the transaction batch.

### MDR on UPI:

- **When UPI was launched** in 2016, **MDR was applicable**.
- But in January **2020**, the **government removed MDR on UPI and RuPay debit cards** to push mass adoption of digital payments.
- But zero MDR also meant banks, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and fintech startups got nothing from the transaction.
- The **government has compensated the industry through subsidies**.

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### ENGLISH IN INDIA, A LANGUAGE THAT HAS EARNED ITS PLACE

- India is home to **remarkable linguistic diversity**, with languages serving as carriers of history, culture and identity.
- The position of English in this landscape often generates debate because of its colonial origins.
- Although English was introduced through British colonialism, **Indians have appropriated, transformed and Indianised it** over more than two centuries.

#### Historical Evolution of English in India

- **Colonial Origins**
  - English initially entered India as an instrument of colonial administration, commerce, missionary activity and imperial governance.
  - Its early expansion was **closely associated with British interests**, however, languages are not permanently defined by their origins.
  - Once communities adopt a language, they reshape it according to their own needs, values and experiences.

#### Constitutional and Institutional Acceptance

- **Post-Independence Language Settlement**
  - Hindi was recognised as the Official Language of the Union, while English was retained for official purposes.
  - This arrangement reflected **India's commitment to linguistic accommodation** rather than forced uniformity.
- **Institutional Significance**
  - Over the decades, English became deeply embedded in:
  - Legislature and executive
  - Judiciary and administration
  - Higher education and research
  - Science, technology and professional communication

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### English and Indian Literary Expression

- **Emergence of Indian Writing in English**
  - Writers such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Amitav Ghosh and Vikram Seth have demonstrated that English can authentically express Indian experiences.
  - The **Sahitya Akademi's recognition of English** further confirms its place within India's literary landscape.
- **Cultural Adaptation**
  - Indian Writing in **English has incorporated Indian histories, traditions**, social realities and cultural sensibilities.
  - It shows that a language can be transformed by the community that uses it and become a medium of Indian cultural expression.

### The Indianisation of English

- **Emergence of Indian English**
  - India has developed Indian English, **characterised by distinctive pronunciation**, vocabulary, idioms and rhetorical patterns.
  - Raja Rao anticipated this evolution, arguing that India would eventually develop its **own form of English**.
- **Language Shaped by Society**
  - Indian English reflects India's multilingual environment, cultural traditions and social realities.
  - Its evolution demonstrates that language is shaped not merely by its birthplace but by the communities that use it.

### Conclusion

- English cannot claim the same ancient indigenous status as Sanskrit or Tamil because it entered India through colonial rule, yet its historical origin does not determine its contemporary identity.
- Over generations, Indians have transformed English through nationalism, literature, education, governance, professional life and everyday communication.

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### WHAT IS A PERMANENT PICTORIAL CANCELLATION (PPC)?



- It is a **postmark**, which shows a **replica/photo/design** or a **picture** highlighting a **tourist, religious, historical, or an important place or a living/non-living thing**.
- PPCs give **wide publicity to many places** of historical, cultural, and tourist interest.
- It is one of the **accepted methods of cancellation at post offices**.
- They are **provided at the post offices**, which are **located near such significant places**.
- In PPC, the **replica/photo/design** or a picture is **used as the cancellation seal**.
- However, the **regular features of the cancellation, the zip code, and date will be included** in the seal.
- **Unlike an ordinary cancellation** used to cancel postage stamps on a particular day, a **PPC is available for use on a permanent basis** at a designated post office.
- The pictorial cancellation **can also be imprinted on postcards and inland letters**. Once the pictorial cancellation is made, no normal cancellation is needed.
- It is of particular **interest to philatelists (stamp collectors)** because it provides a distinctive and lasting postal marking associated with a specific subject or location.

### **Key Facts about Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple:**

- It is a **Hindu temple** dedicated to Lord Vishnu located in **Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kerala**.
- The name of the city of Thiruvananthapuram in Malayalam translates to “The City of Lord Ananta,” referring to the deity of Padmanabhaswamy Temple.
- The **earliest recorded** mention of the temple is from the **8th or 9th century CE**, although the temple is likely older.
- The temple was **built and rebuilt over the centuries, most recently by Martanda Varma, king of Travancore**, who in **1750** donated the kingdom to the deity.
- The temple has around **3 million palm leaf manuscripts** dating back to the **14th century**.

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- Known as **Mathilakam records**, they contain the **administrative and financial details** of the temple town and **Travancore kingdom** spread over six centuries.
- In 2011 the temple was the **subject of international news** when an exploration of its vaults revealed a **wealth of jewels**, precious metals, and other **treasures**.
  - It is also widely believed to be the **world's richest temple**.

### DIRAC MEDAL



- It was first awarded in 1985.
- It is given in **honor of P.A.M. Dirac**, one of the **greatest physicists** of the 20th century.
- It is **awarded annually on Dirac's birthday**, August 8, to scientists who have made **significant contributions to theoretical physics**.
- It is awarded by the **International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP)**.
- **Selection Process:** An international committee of distinguished scientists selects the winners from a list of nominated candidates.
- The Dirac Medal is **not awarded to Nobel Laureates, Fields Medallists, or Wolf Foundation Prize winners**, although several past Dirac medallists later went on to receive those honours.
- **Cash Prize:** The Medalist also receives a **prize of US \$5,000**.
- Deepak Dhar is also the **second Indian winner** of the Dirac Medal; the first was string theorist **Ashoke Sen**.
- Dhar is known for his work on a **concept called Abelian sandpiles**.

### What is International Centre for Theoretical Physics?

- It is an international research institute for **physical and mathematical sciences**.
- The centre was **founded in 1964**. It is located in **Trieste, Italy**.
- It **operates under a tripartite agreement** between the **Italian Government, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**.

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### HANDLOOM SECTOR IN INDIA - ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE, CHALLENGES, AND THE ROAD AHEAD

- Handloom weaving in India has a legacy that stretches far beyond craft. Long before the Industrial Revolution transformed manufacturing in Europe, Indian handlooms were among the world's greatest industrial enterprises.
- Indian textiles travelled across continents, powered global trade, and established India's reputation as one of history's foremost manufacturing economies.
- **National Handloom Day**, marked on August 7, commemorates the launch of the **Swadeshi Movement** and honours generations of Indian weavers.

#### **Economic Significance of Handloom**

- The handloom sector is often viewed as a small artisanal activity, culturally important but economically peripheral. The data suggests otherwise.
  - It provides livelihoods to more than 35 lakh weavers and allied workers.
  - These workers belong to over 31 lakh households.
  - Women constitute nearly 70% of the workforce.
  - It remains one of rural India's largest sources of non-farm employment.
  - It produces nearly 15% of the country's cloth, despite relying largely on manual technology.

#### **Challenges Facing the Sector**

- While a few celebrated weaving traditions continue to enjoy strong recognition, hundreds of lesser-known traditions face gradual extinction.
- The main pressures include declining returns for weavers, fragmented markets that limit access to buyers, and the breakdown of skill transmission within families.
- Younger generations are leaving the profession as incomes fall and the work is no longer seen as viable or aspirational.
- Protecting handloom heritage is therefore both an economic necessity and a civilisational responsibility.

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### Government Support and Recent Progress

- Policy and programme support appears to be making a difference.
- The **National Handloom Development Programme** has focused on skill development, design innovation, technology adoption, branding, and improved market access.
- Greater integration with e-commerce platforms and expanding export opportunities have enabled many artisan clusters to reach consumers who were previously inaccessible.
- The Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms, in collaboration with UNESCO, has begun identifying and documenting India's languishing and endangered weaves. There is a case for extending this documentation across every region of the country.
- Alongside this, there is a policy focus on promoting **Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged handloom and handicraft products** and strengthening their presence in both domestic and international markets.

### Expanding Global Reach

- India must also think beyond domestic markets. Global consumers increasingly value authenticity, sustainability, and handcrafted luxury, all areas where Indian handlooms enjoy a natural competitive advantage.
- Expanding exports, however, will require consistent quality standards, stronger branding, better GI protection, and vigilant action against cultural misappropriation.

### Need for Better Measurement

- Unlike most manufacturing sectors, India's handloom economy is inadequately measured.
  - Policymakers need reliable data on its contribution to GDP, exports, tax revenues, employment, and household incomes.
  - Better measurement will enable better policy and allow the sector to be recognised for the economic value it already creates.
  - Establishing a national platform through which States, producer organisations, and cooperatives can exchange successful practices would also accelerate innovation across the sector.
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### THE MECCA AGREEMENT: SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY AND PAKISTAN SIGN A NEW DEFENCE PACT

Recently, **Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan** signed the Mecca (Makkah) **Joint Defence Agreement** in the presence of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The pact declares that an armed attack on any one of the three states will be treated as an attack on all three, marking a significant new trilateral security arrangement in West Asia with direct implications for India.

- According to officials, the agreement rests on **four pillars**:
  - a collective-deterrence clause modelled on Article 51 of the UN Charter,
  - joint training and military exercises,
  - intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and
  - defence-industrial integration — particularly Turkish drone production feeding into Saudi capacity.
- India has adopted a non-committal closely following" posture.

#### **Implications for India**

- For India, the pact signals deeper strategic integration between **Saudi Arabia and the Pakistan-Turkey-China axis**.
- Three imperatives follow for India to prevent this grouping from consolidating into a coordinated front against Indian interests:
  - **Insulating** its bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia (built on energy, expatriate welfare and counterterrorism cooperation) from spillover effects;
  - **Intensifying** bilateral defence engagement with Gulf states to prevent diplomatic isolation on Kashmir-related narratives; and
  - **Calibrating** its own extended-neighbourhood posture — Quad engagement, Indian Ocean naval presence, and defence diplomacy with Israel and moderate Arab states.