

The language friendship bridge

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In news– The Indian Council for Cultural Relations has envisaged a special project called ‘The Language Friendship Bridge’ which plans to create a pool of experts in 10 languages from some neighbouring countries and others who share a cultural heritage with India.

About the language friendship bridge-

- Looking to expand its cultural footprint in nations with whom it has historical ties, including those in its immediate neighbourhood, India is planning to create a pool of experts in languages spoken in neighbour countries to **facilitate better people-to-people exchanges.**
- **As of now, the ICCR has zeroed in on 10 languages:** Kazakh, Uzbek, Bhutanese, Ghoti (spoken in Tibet), Burmese, Khmer (spoken in Cambodia), Thai, Sinhalese and Bahasa (spoken in both Indonesia and Malaysia).
- In India, the language learning focus till now has been on European languages like Spanish, French and German, along with the languages of major Asian economies like China and Japan.
- Though a number of universities and institutes offer courses in these languages, only a handful teach any of the 10 languages on the ICCR list. Sinhala, for example, is taught at the Banaras Hindu University and the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) under the Ministry of Defence.
- The SFL also has courses in Bahasa, Burmese and Tibetan.
- **The idea is to enable India to translate its epics and classics,** as well as contemporary literature, into these languages so that people in both countries can read

them.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations-

- It is an autonomous organisation of the Government of India, involved in India's global cultural relations, through cultural exchange with other countries and their people.
- It was **founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**, independent India's first Education Minister.
- **Its objectives are-**
 - To actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to India's external cultural relations.
 - To foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries.
 - To promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people.
 - To develop relations with nations.
- The Council **addresses its mandate of cultural diplomacy through a broad range of activities.**
- In addition to **organising cultural festivals in India and overseas**, the ICCR financially supports a number of **cultural institutions** across India, and sponsors individual performers in dance, music, photography, theatre, and the visual arts.
- It **also administers the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding**, established by the Government of India in 1965, whose last award was in 2009.