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Tagore Awards for Cultural Harmony:

Why in News?

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 to Shri Rajkumar Singhajit Singh, Chhayanaut (a cultural organisation of Bangladesh) and Shri Ram Vanji Sutar respectively.

About the Award:

- Award is a celebration of Indian traditions of culture and of our civilisational wealth – whether in literature or music, art or drama, sculpture or handicrafts, design or digital art.
- Each region in our country has a distinct cultural identity.
- Yet, in its essence, culture does not divide – it unites and harmonises all of India and all of humanity.

Contributions of Awardee:

- Shri Rajkumar Singhajit Singh is one of our greatest exponents of Manipuri dance.
- He has bridged this age-old art form of Manipur with not only modern sensibilities but with other parts of the country.
- Chhayanaut is an organisation that has promoted and preserved the works and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore in Bangladesh.
- And Shri Ram Vanji Sutar is a sculptor and scholar who represents an art tradition that goes back thousands of years to our ancient past. These days he is most well-known for the Statue of Unity.

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Central WAQF Council

Why in News?



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For the first time since the Independence, the Central Government has been providing 100 per cent financial help to utilise Waqf properties across the country for educational empowerment and job-oriented skill development of the needy sections of the society.

About Central waqf council:

- **Central Wakf Council, India** is an [Indian statutory body](#) established in 1964 by the [Government of India](#) under Wakf Act, 1954 (now a sub section the Wakf Act, 1995) for the purpose of advising it on matters pertaining to working of the State Wakf Boards and proper administration of the [Wakfs](#) in the country.
- Wakf is a permanent dedication of movable or immovable properties for religious, pious or charitable purposes as recognized by [Muslim Law](#), given by [philanthropists](#).
- The grant is known as *mushrut-ul-khidmat*, while a person making such dedication is known as *Wakf*

The Council

The Council is headed by a Chairperson, who is the Union Minister in charge of Wakfs and there are maximum 20 other members, appointed by Government of India as stipulated in the Wakf Act.

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Ships building in India;

Why in News?

In a big step to promote the Make in India initiative and incentivize ship building activity in the country, the Ministry of Shipping has revised its guidelines for chartering of ships by providing Right of First Refusal (RoFR) to ships built in India.



Details:

- Henceforth, whenever a tendering process is undertaken to charter a vessel, a bidder offering a ship built in India will be given the first priority to match the L1 quote.
- It is expected that this priority given to ships built in India will raise the demand for such vessels, providing them with additional market access and business support.
- Prior to the revision of the guidelines, the RoFR was reserved for Indian flag vessels as per the relevant provisions of Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.

Why was it needed?

- The review is also in line with the need to give a long term strategic boost to the domestic shipbuilding industry.
- The need to encourage the domestic shipping industry to support the domestic shipbuilding industry, and the need to develop self-reliance and a strong synergy between these vital industries for the overall long term development and economic growth of the country.

Steps taken:

- The Government of India has taken several steps to promote shipbuilding in India especially by providing long term subsidy for under the Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy (2016-2026).
- Budgetary provision of Rs. 30 crore was earmarked in 2018-19 for providing financial assistance to all Indian Shipyards, excluding Defence Shipyards.

About Regional Maritime Safety Conference

- The Regional Maritime Safety Conference is being organized by India for the first time .
- The objective of the conference is to deliberate on issues related to assuring maritime safety in the India-ASEAN sub region, safeguarding our shores and promoting trade along the sea routes.
- The conference will address a wide range of issues that affect regional maritime safety, including transport safety, maritime law, ship building, transportation of hazardous goods, marine oil spill, pollution and environmental safety.
- The inaugural edition is being organised by the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) in coordination with the Ministry of Shipping and the Ministry of External Affairs



Mariculture:

Background:

About 37% of the area of the entire world is agricultural land, a third of which (about 11%) is used for crops. And as the population of the world rises to 9.7 billion people in 30 years, the land available for crops will reduce. Thus, there is an immediate need to try and improve the efficiency of food production.

Statistics:

Experts predict that agricultural yield must increase by 50% between now and 2050. How to do this is the question facing agricultural scientists across the world.

How to deal with it?

- Plants use sunlight to produce energy for their metabolism and food production.
- This is referred to as photosynthesis (wherein sunlight is used to make energy-rich molecules needed for producing food molecules). However, the efficiency of photosynthesis is rather low, just about 5% in most land crops.
- The most efficient land crop with 8% average is sugarcane, which is not all that edible, except for the sugar in it. If only we can increase the efficiency of crops such as wheat, rice and other grains!

Genetic engineering

- One way of achieving it has been shown in the model plant tobacco where the scientists could "engineer photosynthesis" by increasing the expression of three genes involved in processing light.
- This increases the tobacco yield by 20%.
- Another way that some other scientists are trying is to reduce what is called photorespiration in plants.
- Here the energy and oxygen produced in the 'light reaction' of photosynthesis is drained by the plant to make "wasteful" products in the



'dark reaction', and not just carbohydrates and other food material, particularly when the plant's leaves close in order to reduce water loss by evaporation.

Include seaweeds in our diet

- It is in this context that we need to open our minds and expand our ideas about our food habits.
- The most efficient use of photosynthesis is actually not by land plants but by micro and macro algae, such as seaweeds.
- These are the champions, contributing to about 50% of all photosynthesis in the world. And many of them, notably those with dark green, red and brown colour, are edible.

Seaweed research

- About 844 seaweed species are reported from India, a country with a coast line of 7,500 km. Peninsular India from Gujarat all way to Odisha and West Bengal has a coast line of 5,200 km, and Andaman and Nicobar together have a coast line of 2,500 km.
- Thus, while we have 63% of our land area for crop agriculture, we should not forget this vast coastal area, much of which breeds seaweeds. Research in the area of edible seaweeds in India has been going on for over 40 years.

About Seaweeds:

- Seaweeds are rich sources of vitamins A and C, and minerals such as Ca, Mg, Zn, Se and Fe.
- They also have a high level of vegetable proteins and omega 3 and 6 fatty acids. Best of all, they are vegetarian, indeed vegan, and do not have any fishy smell, thus good and acceptable.
- For all for those who worry about this "new" introduction, let us recall that India took quickly to imports like potatoes, tea and most recently to soyabean.

Great Indian hornbil:



Why in News?

Amid a changing environment, with natural homes of birds getting depleted as natural forests make way for plantations and other such modified terrain, comes the good news of how the great Indian hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) adapts to such change.

A group of researchers from NCBS-TIFR in Bengaluru and Nature Conservation Foundation in Mysuru observed eight hornbill nests, three located in contiguous forests and five located in modified habitats such as coffee plantations. They found that the birds followed similar nesting behaviour but adapted to the changed environment.

Details of Study:

- The team chose to study the great Indian hornbills nesting in the Anamalai hills.
- For comparison, the researchers located the study in the modified habitat in the Valparai plateau and the contiguous forests in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve and the Vazhachal Reserve forests.
- The modified habitat included tea, coffee and cardamom plantations and tribal settlements.

Nesting habits

- Hornbills are secondary cavity nesters and choose cavities formed in large trees for nesting.
- Also they are monogamous, and the female, after copulation, seals herself in the hole until the initial breeding period of two-four months is over.
- During this time, the female and the young ones are fed by the male bird, with fruit such as figs and animal matter. So, in principle, along with other threats such as hunting, modified land use, ensuing forest fragmentation, felling of large trees with the potential for nesting, the loss of fruit bearing trees could also affect hornbill nesting habits.
- "Great hornbills may adapt to habitat modification provided that their key requirements for food and nesting are fulfilled in the habitats like coffee and forest fragments.



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- Considering that hornbills use same nest over years, protection of these known nest trees and retention of large trees that can be potential nests is absolutely essential.
- In addition, it would be necessary to have a diversity of native tree species, particularly figs, laurels and other food plants, the study concludes.