

Living root bridges of Meghalaya

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In news- As the Meghalaya government pitched for UNESCO recognition, the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has underlined some green rules for the living root bridges of Meghalaya to get the UNESCO World Heritage Site tag.

About living root bridges of Meghalaya-

- A living root bridge is like a **suspension bridge (areal) formed by guiding the pliable roots of the rubber fig tree (*Ficus elastica*) across a stream** or river and allowing the roots to grow and strengthen over time.
- Such a bridge is **locally called Jingkieng jri.**
- **They are handmade from the aerial roots of rubber fig trees by the Khasi and Jaintia** people of the mountainous terrain along the southern part of the Shillong Plateau.
- These bridges are being **preserved by tribal communities of Meghalaya as per a customary practice of preserving the sacred groves known as 'Law Kyntang'**.
- These bridges are trailblazers that not only highlight the symbiotic relationship between nature and human culture to a global audience, but more so, it focuses on the need to adopt a balanced approach between economy and ecology.
- **The two most popular tourist spots are-** Riwai Root Bridge and Umshiang Double Decker Bridge.
- Most of the bridges grow on steep slopes of subtropical moist broadleaf forest between 50m and 1150m above sea level.
- As long as the tree from which it is formed remains healthy, the roots in the bridge can naturally grow thick and strengthen.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites-

- A World Heritage Site is a location with an **“outstanding universal value”**.
- They are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific or other forms of significance.
- The sites are judged to contain “cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity”.
- These sites are demarcated by UNESCO as protected zones.
- According to the World Heritage Convention’s operational guidelines, a tentative list is an “inventory” of properties a country believes deserves to be a World Heritage Site.
- After UNESCO includes a property in the Tentative List, that country has to prepare a nomination document that will be considered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.