

2019



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

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BusinessLine



1. Avian Botulism

Why in News?

The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) confirmed avian botulism as the reason for mass mortality of birds, including migratory species from Northern Asia, at Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan.

Avian Botulism

- Avian botulism is a neuro-muscular illness caused by a toxin **Botulinum** which is produced by a bacteria called **Clostridium botulinum**.
- The illness affects the nervous system of birds, leading to flaccid paralysis in their legs and wings and neck touching the ground.
- The bacteria is commonly found in the soil, rivers, and sea water and affects both humans and animals.
- The bacteria is also found in the gills and digestive tracts of healthy fish.
- Maggots and birds feeding on dead birds can also get affected.
- The toxin has been recognised as a major cause of mortality in wild birds since the 1900s.

Sambhar Lake

- Sambhar Lake is **India's largest inland saline water body** - spread over Jaipur, Nagaur and Ajmer.
- The lake is **surrounded on all sides by the Aravali hills**.
- It is the source of most of **Rajasthan's salt production**.
- It has been designated as a **Ramsar site** (recognised wetland of international importance) because the wetland is a key wintering area for tens of thousands of flamingos and other birds that migrate from northern Asia.

2. Living Root Bridges in Meghalaya

Why in News?

According to a recent study, living root bridges can be considered a reference point for future botanical architecture projects in urban contexts.

- New research has proposed to integrate them in modern architecture around the world, and potentially help make cities more environment-friendly.

What are living root bridges?

- The **jing kieng jri** or **living root bridges** have been serving as connectors for generations in Meghalaya.
- A root bridge uses traditional tribal knowledge from the indigenous **Khasi** and **Jaintia** people.
- These are **aerial bridges** built by weaving and manipulating the roots of the Indian rubber tree which are found in abundance in the area.

- A seedling is planted on each bank of the river or the edge of a ravine.
- Once aerial roots sprout they are wound around a framework of bamboo or palm stems and are directed toward the opposite bank.
- On reaching the other side, they are implanted in the soil.
- The roots of Indian rubber tree can form highly complex structures which create stable and safe bridges.
- Spanning between 15 and 250 feet and built over the centuries, the bridges are primarily a means to cross streams and rivers.
- **Ficus elastica (Indian rubber)** is conducive to the growth of bridges because of its very nature:
 - They are elastic.
 - Roots easily combine.
 - Plants grow in rough, rocky soils.
- **Advantages:**
 - Unlike bridges made from wood or bamboo, they aren't easily swept away and they don't rot- a common problem in the world's wettest region.
 - They've also proven more durable than bridges made from modern steel structures that quickly rust and decay in the damp climate.
 - This can also help facilitate better adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

3. **Srisailem Dam**

Why in News?

According to a recent report several floods in recent times have damaged the Srisailem dam which can endanger the foundation of dam. In view of this, it needs urgent repair to avoid a disaster.

Srisailem Dam

- It is constructed across the Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is situated in the Nallamala Hills - a section of Eastern Ghats.

Krishna River

- It arises from a spring near Mahabaleshwar in Sahyadri (Maharashtra) and reaches the Bay of Bengal.
- **Tributaries** - The Tungabhadra, the Koyana, the Ghatprabha, the Musi and Bhima.
- **Drainage Basin** covers four states:
 - **Maharashtra**
 - **Andhra Pradesh**
 - **Karnataka**
 - **Telangana**

4. Green Steel

Why in News?

Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Steel has asked the Steel industry in the country to work towards the mission of Green Steel.

Green Steel

- The term ‘Green Steel’ refers to a **steelmaking process** that lowers greenhouse gas emissions, cuts costs and improves the quality of steel.
- This can be done through usage of gas in place of coal, recycling steel etc.
- Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry has launched **Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project** in the Eastern India, which can provide gas to all the Steel plants, located in the area.
- Government has also launched a collaborative campaign “**Ispati Irada**” for brand building to increase appropriate usage of steel in the country.

4. Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal for enactment of Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019 and accession to the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009.

Hong Kong Convention

- It was adopted at a diplomatic conference held in Hong Kong, China in 2009.
- It will enter into force 24 months after at least 15 states have ratified the convention. As of end of June 2019, the following countries have acceded to the convention:
 - Norway
 - Congo
 - France
 - Belgium
 - Panama
 - Denmark
 - Turkey
 - Netherland
 - Serbia
 - Japan
 - Estonia
 - Malta
- It aims to ensure that decommissioned ships are recycled in a sustainable manner, without any unnecessary risk to human health and safety, and to the environment.
- It intends to address issues such as:
 - Presence of environmentally hazardous substances-asbestos, heavy metals, hydrocarbons in ship recycling.
 - Concerns about working and environmental conditions in many of the world's ship recycling facilities.

- When Convention comes into force, its provisions will be implemented under the provisions of the Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019.
- **Significance:**
 - It will bring the global best practices to scientifically deal with ship recycling in India.
 - It will restrict and prohibits the use of hazardous material which applies irrespective of whether a ship is meant for recycling or not.
 - Ships shall be surveyed and certified on the inventory of hazardous materials used in ships.



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