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Living Root Bridges (LRBs), Meghalaya

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In News: India has submitted a nomination dossier to **UNESCO** seeking **World Heritage status** for Meghalaya's Living Root Bridges under the title "**Jingkieng Jri / LyChrai Cultural Landscape.**"

What are Living Root Bridges (LRBs)?

- Living Root Bridges are **bio-engineered structures** formed by training the aerial roots of the **Indian rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*)**.
- They serve as **sustainable rural connectivity systems** in the **subtropical moist broadleaf forest eco-region** of Meghalaya.
- Locally known as **Jingkieng Jri**, meaning "*bridge of living roots.*"

Communities Involved

- Developed and maintained by **indigenous Khasi tribal communities**.
- Knowledge is transmitted through **oral traditions and community practice**, reflecting indigenous ecological wisdom.

Uses and Functions

1. Connectivity & Livelihood

- Bridges, ladders and steps provide **reliable transport** across fast-flowing streams.
- Critical during **monsoons**, when conventional bridges fail.

2. Environmental Protection

- Prevent **soil erosion and landslides**.
- Strengthen riverbanks through living root systems.

3. Social & Cultural Uses

- Platforms and towers used for:
- Community gathering,
- Recreation,
- Local security and surveillance.

Construction Technique

1 Indian rubber trees are planted on **opposite riverbanks**.

2 Aerial roots are:

o Manually guided,

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oTwisted and interwoven across the stream.

3Scaffolding materials:

oAreca palm trunks,

oBamboo,

oStones.

4Time frame:

oTakes **10–15 years** to become fully functional.

oStrength increases with age, often lasting **several centuries**.

Significance of the UNESCO Nomination

1. Cultural Landscape Recognition

- Recognises LRBs as a **living cultural landscape**, shaped by continuous human–nature interaction.

2. Indigenous Knowledge Systems

- Highlights sustainable, low-carbon infrastructure developed without modern engineering.

3. Conservation & Sustainable Development

- Supports:
- Biodiversity conservation,
- Climate-resilient infrastructure,
- Community-led heritage preservation.