Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS)

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

Why in News?

Water samples collected from three key flamingo habitats in Navi Mumbai show rising toxicity levels.

- **Location –** Situated along the eastern suburb of Mumbai, Maharashtra, between ***Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.***
- It was declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary in 2018.
- **Declared under-**The *Wildlife Protection Act, 1972* and managed by the Maharashtra Forest Department.
- **Rivers & Ecosystem –** The creek gets the largest source of fresh water from ***Ulhas River*** and numerous drainage channels. It receives saline water from Arabian sea.
- *Estuarine ecosystem* formed by Thane Creek, an inlet of the Arabian Sea.
- Rich in mangroves, mudflats, and tidal creeks.
- Acts as a natural buffer against coastal erosion and floods.
- **Vegetation & Flora – Mangroves** - Avicennia, Rhizophora, Sonneratia species.
    - **Carbon sink role** - Mangroves absorb CO_2, contributing to climate change mitigation.
- **Mudflats-** Feeding grounds for migratory birds.
- Salt-tolerant vegetation adapted to tidal conditions.
- **Fauna – Flamingos -** Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) and Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*).
- **Other birds** - Sandpipers, gulls, herons, egrets, ~200 bird species.
- Declared as an *Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International.*
- **Breeding & Migration –** Flamingos breed in Kutch, Gujarat, but migrate to TCFS for feeding.
- **Seasonal migration -** *October – May* and Peak congregation*: February – March.*

- TCFS hosts more than 1 lakh flamingos annually.
- Part of the *Central Asian Flyway (CAF),* a major global migratory bird route.
- **Ramsar Site Recognition** – It was recognized as a Ramsar Site in 2022.
- **Threats – Pollution-** High total dissolved solids (TDS), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD), and alkaline pH levels in satellite wetlands.
- **Urbanization-**Wetland reclamation by CIDCO and real estate projects.
- **Habitat Loss-**Reduced tidal flushing, stagnant water.
- **Plastic & Sewage Pollution** - Marine debris affecting feeding grounds.
- **Climate Change** - Altered hydrology and salinity levels.

References

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