



Natural Resource Accounting (NRA)

For Prelims: Natural Resource Accounting (NRA), System of Economic and Environmental Accounting (SEEA), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board (GASAB), CAG

For Mains: Natural Resource Accounting (NRA) - its significance, India's initiatives and challenges in its implementation

Why in News?

Recently, the [Comptroller and Auditor General of India](#) has stated that it would be coming up with **report on Natural Resource Accounting (NRA)** by November 2022.

- It is an attempt to develop accounting systems to help monitoring their responsible utilisation, which will in turn lead to sustainability.

What is Natural Resource Accounting (NRA)?

- **About:**
 - Natural Resource Accounting is a process of estimating the value of natural resource depletion and environment degradation due to economic activities.
 - The concept of NRA was emerged to capture the intimate **interplay between the various components of the natural environment and the economic progress of a country.**
 - It is based on the concept - '**measurement of a resource leads to its better management**'.
- **Historical Perspective:**
 - The need for NRA took its **first step at the [United Nations \(UN\) conference on Human Environment in 1970 \(Stockholm Conference\)](#)** when the relationship between economic development and environmental degradation was discussed for the first time.
 - The **Brundtland Commission**, set up by the UN, articulated the idea of close association between the environment and economic activities in 1987, which was followed up by environmental accounting and the [Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.](#)

What are the Initiatives Taken to Promote NRA?

- **Initiative at Global Level:**
 - UN General Assembly resolution titled, "**Transforming our world; the 2030 agenda for sustainable development**" (25th of September, 2016) which got the approval of more than 190 countries, **requires the preparation of Natural Resource Accounts.**
 - **India is a signatory to this resolution.**
 - The UN, in 2012, adopted the [System of Economic and Environmental Accounting \(SEEA\).](#) It is the **latest internationally accepted framework for NRA.**
 - Around 30 nations like Australia, Canada, China, France, and Germany have attained various degrees of success in adopting environmental accounting.

- The [Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of the Ecosystem Services \(NCAVES\) Project](#), funded by the European Union, has been jointly implemented by the **United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)**, the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP) and the **Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)**.
 - **India** is one of the **five countries taking part in this project** - the other countries being **Brazil, China, South Africa and Mexico**.
 - It is an umbrella term covering efforts to make use of an **accounting framework** to provide a systematic way **to measure and report on stocks and flows of natural capital**.
- **India-Specific Initiatives:**
 - The CAG established the **Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board (GASAB)** in 2002 with the aim to improve standards of Governmental accounting and financial reporting to enhance the quality of decision-making and public accountability.
 - It consists of **representatives of all accounting services in GoI, regulatory authorities like RBI, ICAI and State Governments**.
 - The CAG of India is also a **member of an international body of Supreme Audit Institutions, called WGEA (Working Group on Environmental Auditing)**, which suggested (2010) that the audit institutions should aid their countries to adopt Natural Resources Accounts.

What is the Significance of Natural Resource Accounting?

- **Interrelation between Economy and Environment -**
 - Quantifies the nonrenewal damage to the environmental resources and assists in determination of development in real terms.
- **Aid to policy framing: sound database -**
 - To help policy makers to understand the potential impact of their decisions.
- **Managing SDGs -**
 - NRA has deep inter-linkages with the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) as 4 out of the 17 goals directly relate to management of natural resources and their accounting.
- **Combating Climate change -**
 - Asset and flow accounts have been recognized as a useful framework for monitoring, measuring and analysing climate change.
- **International commitments -**
 - Besides fulfilling the SDGs, it would help India become a part of the group of elite countries in generating Asset Accounts.

What are the Challenges Related to Accounting of Natural Resources?

- There is lack of proper training and capacity building among state officers.
- Limitations in preparing the asset accounts - mapping the periodicity of data.
- Multiple agencies are involved in data collection for resources; it may give rise to the issues of data sharing/data conflict.

[Source: BS](#)

Electoral Bonds

For Prelims: Electoral Bonds, Political Parties, Representation of the People Act 1951

For Mains: Effects of Electoral Bonds on the election process, Issues Arising Out of Design & Implementation of Policies

Why in News?

Recently, the [State Bank of India \(SBI\)](#) shared data reporting that **Donations to political parties through electoral bonds (EBs)** have crossed the Rs 10,000-crore mark.

- In the 21st sale of EBs conducted in July 2022, **parties received another Rs 389.5 crore from EB purchases.**
- The total amount collected by parties has gone up to **Rs 10,246 crore since 2018 when the EB scheme was introduced.**

What are Electoral Bonds?

- **About:**
 - **State Bank of India is authorised** to issue and encash these bonds.
 - Electoral bonds are **purchased anonymously by donors** and are **valid for 15 days from the date of issue.**
 - As debt instruments, these can be **bought by donors from a bank**, and the [political party can then encash them.](#)
 - These can be redeemed **only by an eligible party by depositing the same in its designated account** maintained with a bank.
 - The bonds are issued by SBI in denominations of **Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.**
 - The bonds are available for purchase by any citizen of India for a **period of ten days each** in the months of **January, April, July and October** as may be specified by the **Central Government.**
- **Eligibility:**
 - Only the political parties registered under Section 29A of the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#) and have **secured not less than 1% of the votes** polled in the last general election to the [House of the People](#) or the **Legislative Assembly**, are eligible to receive electoral bonds.

Why are Electoral Bonds a Concern for India?

- **Contradicting its Basic Idea:**
 - The central criticism of the electoral bonds scheme is that **it does the exact opposite of what it was meant to do** i.e. to bring **transparency to election funding.**
 - For example, critics argue that the **anonymity of electoral bonds is only** for the broader public and opposition parties.
- **Possibility of Extortion:**
 - The fact that such bonds are **sold via a government-owned bank (SBI)** leaves the door open for the **government to know exactly who is funding its opponents.**
 - This, in turn, allows the possibility for the government of the day **to either extort money**, especially from the big companies, or victimise **them for not funding the ruling party** — either way providing an unfair advantage to the party in power.
- **A Blow to Democracy:**
 - Through an amendment to the [Finance Act 2017](#), the Union government has exempted political parties from disclosing donations received through electoral bonds.
 - This means the **voters will not know** which individual, company, or organization has funded which party, and to what extent.
 - However, in a [representative democracy](#), citizens cast their votes for the people who will represent them in Parliament.
- **Compromising Right to Know:**
 - [The Indian Supreme Court](#) has long held that the **“right to know”**, especially in the context of elections, is an integral part of the [right to freedom of expression \(Article 19\)](#) under the [Indian Constitution.](#)

- **Against Free & Fair Elections:**
 - Electoral bonds **provide no details to the citizens.**
 - The said **anonymity does not apply to the government of the day**, which can always access the donor details by demanding the data from the State Bank of India (SBI).
 - This implies that the **government in power can leverage this information and disrupt [free and fair elections](#).**
- **Crony Capitalism:**
 - The electoral bonds scheme **removes all pre-existing limits on political donations** and effectively allows **well-resourced corporations to fund elections** subsequently paving the way for crony capitalism.
 - **Crony Capitalism:** An economic system characterized by **close, mutually advantageous relationships between business leaders and government officials.**

Way Forward

- There is a need for **effective regulation of political financing** along with **bold reforms to break the vicious cycle of [corruption](#) and erosion of quality of democratic polity.**
- It is crucial to **plug the loopholes in the current laws** to make the entire governance machinery more **accountable and transparent.**
- Voters can also help bring in substantial changes by **demanding awareness campaigns.**
 - If voters **reject candidates and parties that overspend or bribe them**, democracy would move a step higher.

[Source: IE](#)

International Tiger Day

For Prelims: International Tiger Day and its Significance, efforts related to tiger conservation

For Mains: Significance of Tiger Conservation

Why in News?

29th July is observed as **International Tiger Day (ITD)** to promote the conservation of the striped cat as well as **to advocate a global system for protecting its natural habitats.**

- ITD was established in 2010 at St Petersburg Tiger Summit in Russia in order to raise awareness about the decline of wild tiger numbers, leaving them on the brink of extinction, and to encourage the work of Tiger Conservation.
- The [Manas Tiger Reserve](#) in Assam has **2.4 tigresses for every tiger**, the annual wildlife monitoring results of the trans-boundary wildlife preserve has revealed.

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What are the Key Points Related to Tiger?

- **Scientific Name:** *Panthera tigris*
- **Indian Sub Species:** *Panthera tigris tigris*.
- **About:**
 - It stretches from Siberian temperate forests to subtropical and tropical forests on the Indian subcontinent and Sumatra.
 - It is the **largest cat species** and a member of the genus *Panthera*.
 - Traditionally **eight subspecies of tigers have been recognized, out of which three are extinct.**
 - **Bengal Tigers:** Indian Subcontinent
 - **Caspian tiger:** Turkey through central and west Asia (extinct).
 - **Amur tiger:** Amur Rivers region of Russia and China, and North Korea
 - **Javan tiger:** Java, Indonesia (extinct).
 - **South China tiger:** South central China.
 - **Bali tiger:** Bali, Indonesia (extinct).
 - **Sumatran tiger:** Sumatra, Indonesia.
 - **Indo-Chinese tiger:** Continental south-east Asia.
- **Threats:**
 - Habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation and poaching.
- **Protection Status:**
 - [Indian Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972: Schedule I](#)
 - [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Red List: Endangered.](#)
 - [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\): Appendix I.](#)
- **Tiger Reserves in India**
 - **Total Number:** 53
 - **Largest:** [Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Andhra Pradesh](#)
 - **Smallest:** Bor tiger reserve in Maharashtra

What is the Status of Tiger Population in India?

- There are currently between 3,726 and 5,578 tigers in the wild worldwide, according to the latest figures by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
 - Tiger populations are stable or increasing in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Russia and China.
- India is home to **over 70 % of the global tiger population.**
- India has achieved the remarkable feat of doubling the tiger population in 2018 itself, 4 years ahead of the targeted year 2022 of the **St. Petersburg Declaration on tiger conservation.**

- According to the tiger census (2018) – conducted once every four years – India has a tiger population of 2,967.

What is the Significance of Tiger Conservation?

- Tiger conservation is a **symbol of conservation of forests**.
- The tiger is **a unique animal which plays a pivotal role in the health and diversity** of an ecosystem.
- It is a top predator which is at the **apex of the food chain and keeps the population of wild ungulates** (primarily large mammals) in check.
 - Thus, Tiger helps in **maintaining the balance between prey herbivores and the vegetation** upon which they feed.
- Therefore, Tiger Conservation is not just about saving a beautiful animal.
 - It is about **making sure that we live a little longer as the forests are known to provide [ecological services](#)** like clean air, water, pollination, temperature regulation etc.

What are the Related Steps Taken?

- **[Project Tiger 1973](#)**: Project Tiger is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched in 1973. It provides havens for tigers in the country's national parks.
- **[National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#)**: It is a statutory body under the MoEFCC and was established in 2005 following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force.
- **Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards**: CA|TS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation.

[Source: IE](#)

Clean, Healthy Environment as a Universal Human Right

For Prelims: Human Rights, United Nations, UNGA, Declaration of Human Rights, Climate Change, Pollution

For Mains: Significance of International Groupings & Treaties, Environment as Human Right, Roles of United Nations

Why in News?

[The United Nations](#) declares access to a **clean, healthy environment** as a [universal human right](#).

- India **voted for the resolution** and pointed out that the **resolutions do not create binding obligations**.
 - Only through **conventions and treaties** do state parties undertake obligations for such rights.

What is the Provision for Clean Environment in Indian Constitution?

- The [right to life \(Article 21\)](#) has been used in a diversified manner in India. It includes, inter alia, the right to survive as a species, quality of life, the right to live with dignity and the right to

livelihood.

- [Article 21](#) of the Indian Constitution states: 'No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedures established by law.'

What do we need to know about the Resolution?

▪ About:

- **Every person on the planet** has the right to live in a **clean, healthy environment**.
- [Climate change](#) and [environmental degradation](#) are the most critical threats awaiting humanity in the future.
- It demonstrates that the **member states can unite** in the collective fight against the triple planetary crisis of **climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution**.
- The declaration adopted by over 160 UN member nations, including India, **is not legally binding**.
 - But, it will **encourage countries** to incorporate the **right to a healthy environment** in national constitutions and regional treaties.
- Russia and Iran **abstained from voting**.

▪ Benefits:

- It will help to **reduce environmental injustices and protection gaps**.
- It can **empower** people, especially those in vulnerable situations, including environmental human rights defenders, children, youth, women and indigenous people.
- This right (Access to Clean, Healthy Environment) **was not included in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948](#)**.
 - This is a historic resolution that will change the very nature of [international human rights law](#).

What are Human Rights?

▪ About:

- **Human rights** are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.
- **Human rights include:**
 - The **right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education etc.**
 - Everyone is entitled to these rights, **without [discrimination](#)**.

▪ International Human Right Law:

- International human rights **law lays down the obligations of Governments** to act in certain ways or to **refrain from certain acts**, in order to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups**.
- **Body of Human Rights:**
 - **A Comprehensive body of human rights law** consists of a **universal and internationally protected code** to which all nations can subscribe and all people aspire.
 - **The United Nations** has defined a broad range of internationally accepted rights, **including civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights**.
 - It has also established **mechanisms to promote and protect these rights** and to assist states in carrying out their responsibilities.
 - The foundations of this body of law are the **Charter of the United Nations** and the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the [General Assembly](#) in 1945 and 1948

What is Climate Change, Biodiversity & Pollution?

▪ Climate Change:

- Climate change refers to **long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns**.
 - These shifts may be **natural**, such as through **variations in the [solar cycle](#)**.

- But since the 1800s, **human activities have been the main driver** of climate change, primarily due to **burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas**.
- **Burning fossil fuels** generates **greenhouse gas emissions** that act like a **blanket wrapped around the Earth**, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.
 - Examples of greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change include **carbon dioxide and methane**.
 - **These come from** using gasoline for driving a car or coal for heating a building.
 - **Clearing land and forests** can also release carbon dioxide.
 - **Landfills for garbage** are a major source of methane emissions.
 - **Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use** are among the main emitters.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - Biodiversity is **all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area**—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world.
 - Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an **intricate web, to maintain balance and support life**.
 - Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive: **food, clean water, medicine, and shelter**.
- **Pollution:**
 - Pollution is the **introduction of harmful materials into the environment**.
 - These harmful materials are called **pollutants**.
 - Pollutants can be natural, such as **volcanic ash**.
 - They can also be created by human activity, such as **trash or runoff produced by factories**.
 - Pollutants damage the quality of air, water, and land.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Other than the Fundamental Rights, which of the following parts of the Constitution of India reflect/ reflects the principles and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)? (2020)

1. Preamble
2. Directive Principles of State Policy
3. Fundamental Duties

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 and 2 only
- (b)** 2 only
- (c)** 1 and 3 only
- (d)** 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Explanation:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1948, establishes the equality and dignity of every human being and stipulates that every Government has a core duty to enable all people to enjoy all their inalienable rights and freedoms.

- Preamble: The objectives of Preamble such as Justice (social, economic, and political), Equality and Liberty also reflect the principles of UDHR. Hence, 1 is correct.
- Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP): Provided under Articles 36 to 51, DPSPs are the principles that aim at providing social and economic justice and set the path towards the welfare state. These DPSP act as obligation on state and are in consonance with human rights. Some of the DPSP that are in sync with human rights are as follows:
 - Article 38: Promoting the welfare state.
 - Article 39: Minimizing inequalities.
 - Article 39A: Free legal aid.
 - Article 41: Supporting vulnerable sections of society like unemployed, sick, disabled and old age persons.
 - Article 43: Securing living wage. Hence, 2 is correct.
- Fundamental Duties (Article 51A): These are basically civic and moral obligations of all citizens of India. As of now, there are 11 fundamental duties in India, which are written in Part IV A of the Constitution. Article 51A (k) talks about providing opportunities for education to the child between the age of 6 and 14 years by the parents or guardian. This aspect somehow relates to ensuring the dignity of children through education. Hence, 3 is correct.
- Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analysing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures. **(2021)**

Source: DTE

India-Uzbekistan Relations

For Prelims: Map of Uzbekistan and neighbouring countries

For Mains: India-Uzbekistan Relations, International Treaties and Agreements

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister for Commerce & Industry attended the 13th Session of the India-Uzbekistan Inter-Governmental Commission.

- Further, he highlighted **India-Uzbekistan** relations as key to India's vision of integrated extended neighbourhood.
 - IGC meeting is **an important platform to deliberate on ideas, discuss issues & strengthen bilateral relations** especially in the field of trade & investment.

What are the Key Highlights of the Session?

- **Minister Highlighted:**
 - That there is a need to take the relationship forward in newer areas like technology, digital

payment solutions, and investment in start-ups.

- The need for an integrated approach for regional connectivity and cooperation.
- Further, there are seven emerging areas of cooperation between both nations namely **Digital Payments, Space Cooperation, Agri and Dairy, Pharma, Gems and Jewellery, MSME, and Inter-regional cooperation.**



How has been India-Uzbekistan Relations?

▪ About:

- India and Uzbekistan have a long history of cooperation.
- After Uzbekistan's independence, India was one of the first countries to acknowledge its state sovereignty.
- Bilateral relations now encompass a wider canvas, including political and strategic issues, defense and security, trade and investment, energy, agriculture, S&T, education, and people-to-people ties.

▪ Initiatives:

◦ Defense Cooperation:

- The first-ever **joint military exercise** held between India and Uzbekistan was named **Dustlik**.
- India has also assisted in setting up an India Room at the Armed Forces Academy of Uzbekistan in Tashkent.

◦ Security Cooperation:

- India and Uzbekistan share common perspectives on a number of **security issues, including terrorism, trans-national organized crime, illegal trafficking, smuggling, etc.**
- The main focus of engagement in this sphere has been to **provide assistance to**

Uzbek security agencies through training and capacity building.

- **Trade:**
 - It has increased from USD 247 million in 2019-20 to USD 342 million in 2021-22, a growth of 38.5%.
- **Investments:**
 - Indian investments by Indian companies include those in the **field of pharmaceuticals, amusement parks, automobile components, and the hospitality industry.**
 - **Amity University and Sharda University have opened campuses in Tashkent** and Andijan respectively.
 - Indian institutions like **iCreate** are actively cooperating with Uzbek counterparts for **promoting a start-up ecosystem in Uzbekistan and training entrepreneurs in setting up incubators.**
- **Tourism:**
 - The Uzbek government has extended the e-Visa facility to Indian tourists.
 - Uzbekistan has also emerged as a significant source of medical tourism with about 8,000 Uzbeks annually seeking medical treatment in India.
- **Solar Power:**
 - Uzbekistan has expressed interest in joining the **[International Solar Alliance](#).**
 - There is interest in Indian participation in the development of the solar power sector through competitive bidding.
- **Bilateral Mechanism:**
 - **National Coordination Committees:** India and Uzbekistan have set up National Coordination Committees to **oversee the implementation of mutually agreed projects and initiatives.**
- **Multilateral Initiatives:**
 - **[India-Central Asia Business Council](#):** The dialogue brought together Business Councils of all five Central Asian countries to take the trade and investment partnership forward with a special focus on energy, pharmaceuticals, automotive, agro-processing, education, and urban infrastructure, transport, civil aviation, IT and tourism.
 - **[India- Central Asia Dialogue](#):** It enables the issues of further strengthening ties between India and the countries of Central Asia in the spheres of politics, economics, digitalization, and cultural and humanitarian direction.

What are the Challenges in India-Uzbekistan Relations?

- There is a very low amount of trade and commerce between the two countries.
- Lack of connectivity, as Uzbekistan is a landlocked country, and the air connectivity is not up to the mark.
- China has made in-roads with Belt and Road Initiative in all the central Asian countries including Uzbekistan.

Way Forward

- Indian companies can take advantage of Uzbekistan's various trade agreements and implement joint beneficial investment projects in the area to tap the economic and trade potential of the two countries.
- There is a need for increased convergence between the two countries.
- Uzbekistan should join the **[International North-South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\)](#)**. With both Iran and India as members of INSTC, the addition of Uzbekistan will move things, especially connectivity, in the proper direction.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following has/have shrunk immensely/ dried up in the recent past due to human activities? (2018)

1. Aral Sea
2. Black Sea
3. Lake Baikal

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 2 only
(d) 1 and 3

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- **Aral Sea: It lies between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.** It has been shrinking steadily since the 1960s after its tributaries were diverted by Soviet irrigation projects. By 2007, the lake had declined to 10% of its original size and had split into four separate lakes. **Hence, 1 is correct.**
- **Black Sea:** It is also known as the Euxine Sea. It is one of the major water bodies and a famous inland sea in the world. The countries sharing a border with the Black Sea include Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia. There has been no dramatic shrinkage of the Black Sea in the recent past. Hence, 2 is not correct.
- **Lake Baikal:** Located in Siberian Russia, this UNESCO World Heritage site has not undergone any dramatic shrinkage in the recent past. One of the most recognizable shifts affecting Lake Baikal is the rapidly increasing number of Spirogyra, a diverse form of algae. Hence, 3 is not correct. **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. A number of outside powers have entrenched themselves in Central Asia, which is a zone of interest to India. Discuss the implications, in this context, of India's joining the Ashgabat Agreement **(2018)**

[Source: PIB](#)

National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment

Why in News?

Recently, the website of the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has been ranked first under Central Ministries Portal, and the **Digital Police portal** ranked second in a [National E-Governance service delivery assessment \(NeSDA\)](#) of websites of central government ministries.

What is National E-Governance Service Delivery Assessment?

- **About:**
 - It is a **periodic assessment intended to improve the effectiveness** of States/Union Territories and the Central Government in **delivery of their online services** to citizens.
 - It is released by **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.**
 - In this assessment, the service **portals were evaluated alongside their parent Ministry/portal Department's** in this project.

- The assessment was conducted by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** in association with its knowledge partners **NASSCOM and KPMG** in 2021.
- NeSDA 2021 is the second edition of NeSDA, **the first edition was launched in 2019 and it is a biennial study.**
- **Categorisation of Portal:**
 - All Government portals that were evaluated were divided into **two main categories-**
 - States/Union Territories/Central Ministry portal.
 - State/Union Territory/ Central Ministry Services Portals.
- **Parameters:**
 - There were **four main parameters** of assessment: -
 - **Accessibility.**
 - **Content Availability.**
 - **Ease of Use and Information Security.**
 - **Privacy for Central Ministry Portals.**
 - An additional **three parameters** were also used for the Central Ministry Services Portals -
 - **End Service Delivery.**
 - **Integrated Service Delivery.**
 - **Status and Request tracking.**
- **Recent evaluation of NeSDA 2021:**
 - In the case of MHA, the [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) Digital Police portal was shortlisted for evaluation under the Services Portal.
 - Accordingly, the main website of Ministry of Home Affairs was chosen as the **parent Ministry portal for evaluation.**
 - In the category of **State/UT portal, among group A states- Kerala** became a front runner and the progress **was made by Tamil Nadu** followed by **Punjab.**
 - Among **group B states- Odisha** being at top **followed by Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar.**
 - Among **North-Eastern states Nagaland, Meghalaya and Assam are at top.**
 - Among UTs, **J&K topped followed by A&N, Puducherry, Delhi and Chandigarh.**

[Source: PIB](#)

Loktak Lake

Why in News?

Recently, Loktak Lake Authority of Manipur recently issued a notice to remove all floating houses and fishing structures on Loktak lake.

- This has evoked a sharp reaction from the local Fishing Community & Homestay Operators.

What are the Issues?

- There is a **Lack of regulation.**
- There is a growing number of homestays and huts that are constructed and have put the lake at risk, and **impacted the environment.**
- There has been a sharp **reduction in fish production** and the traditional fisheries due to a **major hydropower project** that was started in 1983.
 - Also, there is a **loss of agricultural land due to inundation and increased levels of sediments and pollutants** by untreated rivers.



What do we Know About Loktak lake?

▪ About:

- It's located about 40 kilometres south of Imphal.
- It's the **largest freshwater lake in Northeast India**, the pristine Loktak Lake is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Manipur.
 - Known for its **floating circular swamps, which are called phumdis** in the local tongue,
 - The lake invites tourists from far and wide for its ethereal beauty.
 - These **swamps look almost like islands and are a mass of soil, organic matter, and vegetation.**
 - The lake houses the **only floating national park in the world, the [Keibul Lamjao National Park](#)**, which is the last refuge of the **endangered brow-antlered deer or sangai**, Manipur's state animal.
 - In addition, the lake shelters about **230 species of aquatic plants, 100 types of birds, and 400 species of fauna like barking deer, sambar, and Indian python.**
- **Loktak lake was initially designated as a wetland of international importance under the [Ramsar Convention](#) in 1990.**
- Later it was also listed under the [Montreux Record](#) in 1993.

Way Forward

- As most of the floating homestay operators are educated unemployed youths, the government authority should **suggest redesign and help them to make necessary changes by introducing dos and don'ts.**
- Further, there is a need for the **collective responsibility** of every stakeholder to contribute to its conservation and maintenance.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following National Parks is unique in being a swamp with floating vegetation

that supports a rich biodiversity? (2015)

- (a) Bhitarkanika National Park
- (b) Keibul Lamjao National Park
- (c) Keoladeo Ghana National Park
- (d) Sultanpur National Park

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- **Keibul Lamjao National Park:** Loktak lake hosts the world's only floating national park, the Keibul Lamjao National Park. It is a natural habitat for the browantlered deer or the Sangai – which is the state animal of Manipur. The national park is characterized by many floating decomposed plant materials locally called 'phumdis' (a Manipuri word meaning floating mats of soil and vegetation). Loktak Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake in the north-eastern region of India and has been designated as a wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1990.
- **Bhitarkanika National Park:** It was declared as national park in 1998 and is located in Kendrapara district of Odisha. In 2002 it was included as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is home to saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), white crocodile, Indian python, king cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna. The Bhitarkanika sanctuary is the second largest mangrove ecosystem in India. It is inundated by a number of rivers – Brahmani, Baitarni, Dhamra, Pathsala. The park is famous for its green mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles and countless creeks.
- **Keoladeo Ghana National Park:** It was formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary and is located in Bharatpur, Rajasthan. It is a famous avifauna sanctuary that hosts thousands of birds, especially during the winter season. It was declared a protected sanctuary in 1971. It is also a World Heritage Site and was designated as a Ramsar site under the Wetland Convention in 1981. It is a man-made and man-managed wetland. Over 230 species of birds are known to be residents.
- **Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary:** Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, located at the Gurugram district of Haryana, is home for several migratory bird species. Its small area comprises shallow freshwater Sultanpur Lake, where 100 of migratory bird species visit to feed every year. The Sultanpur National Park is known for its rich variety of birds such as Siberian cranes, greater flamingo, ruff, black-winged stilt, common teal, common greenshank, and northern pintail, yellow wagtail, white wagtail, northern shoveller, and rosy pelican. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. What is wetland? Explain the Ramsar concept of 'wise use' in the context of wetland conservation. Cite two examples of Ramsar sites from India. **(2018)**

Source: DTE