

Loktak lake

August 2, 2022

In news— A recent notice by the state government of Manipur **to remove/dismantle all 'athaphums' (circular fish culture ponds) and huts on 'phumdis' (floating organic mass) from the lake** has evoked a sharp reaction from the fishing community and homestay operators.

About Loktak Lake-

- The **largest freshwater lake in Northeast India**, the pristine Loktak Lake((ancient supervolcanic caldera)) is located about 40 kilometres south of Imphal in Manipur.
- The etymology of *Loktak* is *Lok* = “stream” and *tak* = “the end” in Meitei language (Manipuri language).
- The lake is **known for its floating circular swamps, which are called phumdis** in the local tongue.
- 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 is a visual treat for birdwatchers, who can find species like black kite, East Himalayan pied kingfisher, northern hill myna, lesser eastern jungle crow, Burmese pied myna and lesser skylark.
- The lake covers 61 per cent of the total identified wetlands of the state.
- It serves as a source of water for hydropower generation, irrigation and drinking water supply.
- Considering the ecological status and its biodiversity

values, the lake was initially designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on 23 March 1990.

- It was also listed under the *Montreux Record* on 16 June 1993, “a record of Ramsar sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur”

Keibul Lamjao National Park-

- It is a national park in the Bishnupur district of the state of Manipur in India.
- It is 40 km² (15.4 sq mi) in area, the **only floating park in the world and an integral part of Loktak Lake.**
- The national park is characterized by floating decomposed plant material locally called phumdi.
- It was created in 1966 as a wildlife sanctuary to preserve the natural habitat of the endangered Eld's deer (*Cervus eldi eldi*). **In 1977, it was gazetted as national park.**
- Two thirds to three fourths of the total park area is formed by phumdis.
- A waterway through the park provides year-round access by boats plying through the Loktak Lake, to the Pabot Hill in the north.
- **The distinctive nature of the park is that it is too deep to be marsh, too shallow to be a lake.**

Sangai(dancing deer)-

- It is an endemic and endangered subspecies of Eld's deer found only in Manipur, India. It is also the state animal of Manipur.
- Its common English name is Manipur brow-antlered deer or Eld's deer and the scientific name is *Rucervus eldii eldii*.
- Its original natural habitat is the floating marshy grasslands of the Keibul Lamjao National Park.

- IUCN status- Endangered.