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CSB IAS ACADEMY

The Road Map to Mussoorie...

PRELIMS EDGE 2025

03-11-2025

RAMSAR CONVENTION

Context: Conservationists, wildlife officials and academics have got together to push for Ramsar site tag for two interconnected wetlands in Assam.



About Ramsar Convention:

- The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an international treaty for the **conservation and sustainable use of wetlands**.
- The convention is named after the city of **Ramsar** in Iran where it was signed on **2nd of February 1971**.
- Since then, the 2nd of February each year is celebrated as the **World Wetlands Day**.
- The number of parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP) is 172.
- At the centre of the Ramsar philosophy is the **"wise use"** of wetlands.
- **Wise use:** maintenance of ecological character within the context of sustainable development.
- The Convention uses a **broad definition of wetlands**.
- It includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatland, oases, estuaries, deltas

and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fishponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

- When a country **accedes to the Ramsar Convention**, it **must designate at least one wetland** as a Wetland of International Importance.
- The inclusion of a "Ramsar Site" in the List embodies the government's commitment to take the steps necessary to ensure that its ecological character is maintained.
- There are over **2,400 Ramsar Sites** covering 2.5 million sq km on the territories of 171 Ramsar Contracting Parties across the world.
- The **world's first Site** was the **Cobourg Peninsula in Australia**, designated in 1974.
- The **United Kingdom** has the most Ramsar sites, with 175.
- **Mexico** is second with 142 sites, and **India ranks third** with 94 sites.

Criteria for Identification of Wetlands under Ramsar Convention:

If a wetland:

- contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type.
- supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species; or threatened ecological communities.
- supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the

biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.

- supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles or provides refuge during adverse conditions.
- regularly supports 20,000 or more water birds.
- regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of water birds.
- supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies.
- is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path.
- is an important source of food and water resource, increased possibilities for recreation and eco-tourism, etc.



Number of Ramsar sites in India: 94

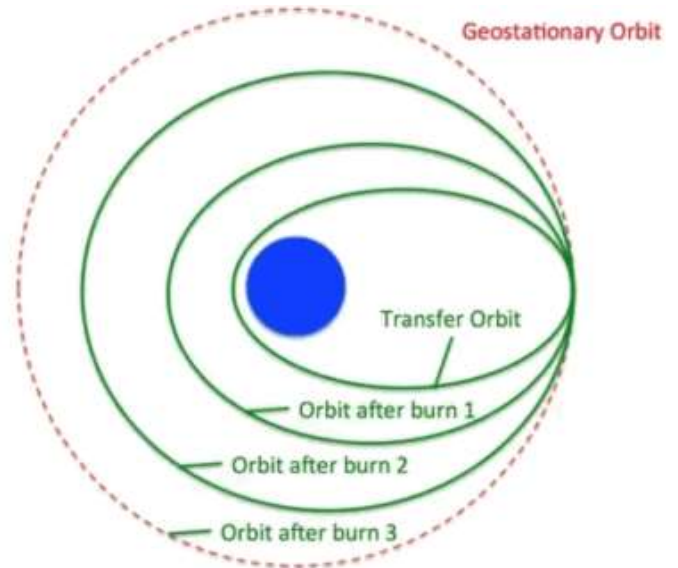
State with highest number of Ramsar sites:
Tamil Nadu (20)

States with no Ramsar sites: Arunachal Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Nagaland

Source: Experts join hands for Ramsar site tag for wetlands in Assam sanctuary (*The Hindu*)

TERMS IN NEWS

Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit



- A **Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)** is a **temporary, elliptical orbit** used to **transfer a satellite from a lower altitude to a higher Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO)**.
- Rockets launch a satellite into a GTO, and the **satellite then uses its onboard fuel to raise its altitude**, often completing two or three orbits before its engines are fired to circularize the orbit and settle into the final geostationary position.
- **Purpose:** It serves as a "shortcut" to reach the high altitude of GEO without needing the launch vehicle to go all the way there directly.
- **Perigee:** The lowest point of the orbit, which is typically a few hundred kilometers above the Earth's surface, above the atmosphere.
- **Apogee:** The highest point of the orbit, which is at the altitude of the target geosynchronous orbit, approximately 42,164 km from Earth's center or 35,786 km above sea level.

Urea Gold



- It is a new variety of **Urea coated with Sulphur**.
 - It is being introduced to address the Sulphur deficiency in soil and save input costs for the farmers.
 - Urea Gold surpasses the existing Neem-coated urea in terms of both economic viability and efficiency.
 - Sulphur-coated urea facilitates a gradual release of nitrogen, thereby enhancing its availability and uptake by crops.
 - The inclusion of humic acid in Urea Gold further extends its lifespan as a fertilizer.
 - This product not only substitutes traditional urea consumption but also reduces overall fertilizer usage.
 - According to the report, 15 kg of Urea Gold provides comparable benefits to 20 kg of conventional urea, making it a **more efficient and effective choice** for farmers.
- **Appearance:** It is a floating aquatic herb that resembles a floating head of lettuce. It has white to tan, long and feathery roots that hang beneath the rosette of leaves.
 - It grows best on still or slow-moving bodies of fresh water such as farm dams, reservoirs, lakes, rivers and creeks.
 - It forms dense mats that clog waterways making boating, fishing, and other water activities impossible.
 - These mats also degrade water quality by blocking the air-water interface and greatly reducing oxygen levels which can result in **fish die-off** and the overall reduction of aquatic fauna and flora diversity.
 - **Impact on Environment:** It affects water flow, damages native ecosystems.



Water Lettuce

- Water lettuce is a **free-floating aquatic weed** found in tropical countries worldwide, including **Asia, Africa and equatorial America**.
- It is also known as **water cabbage, Nile cabbage, or shellflower**.

PLACES IN NEWS

Sambhar Lake



- **Location:** It is the **largest saltwater lake** located in the districts of Nagaur and Jaipur in Rajasthan.
- This **saline wetland** is elliptical in shape, with a length of 35.5 km and a breadth varying between 3 km and 11 km.
- It covers an area in excess of 200 sq.km., surrounded on all sides by the Aravalli hills.
- The water from **two major ephemeral streams**, namely **Mendha and Runpangarh**, along with numerous rivulets and surface runoff feed the lake.
- It was designated as a **Ramsar site** in the year 1990.
- **Salt Production:** It is known for the production of brine/salt and also houses one of the largest salt manufacturing units in the country.
- Several migrating birds visit the waterbody during the winter.

- **Fauna:** It is the most important wintering area for flamingoes (both *Phoniconaias minor* and *Phoenicopterus roseus*) in India outside the Rann of Kachchh.
- Other migratory species like **pelicans**, common shelduck, redshank, and common sandpiper, black-winged stilt, Kentish plover, and Ringed plover, Ruff, and **Sociable lapwing** are also found here.

Cabo Verde



- It is also known in the **Anglosphere** as **Cape Verde**.
- It is an **African country** that is made up of 10 volcanic islands in the **Atlantic Ocean**. It is off of the northwestern portion of the continent.
- Its islands are divided into the Barlavento (windward) and Sotavento (leeward) groups.
- It is located **near Senegal** and is the nearest point on the continent.
- **Climate:** Generally moderate, the climate is characterized by stable temperatures with extreme aridity.
- **Terrain:** The terrain of the Cabo Verde islands varies from the geologically older, flatter

islands in the east and the newer, more mountainous islands in the west.

- **Population:** The overwhelming majority of the population of Cabo Verde is of mixed European and African descent and is often referred to as mestiço or Crioulo.
- **Capital:** Praia
- **Languages spoken:** Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to the Ramsar Convention, consider the following statements:

1. When a country accedes to the Convention, it must designate at least one wetland as a Wetland of International Importance.
2. India has the highest number of Ramsar sites in the world.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit:

1. It is a temporary, elliptical orbit used to transfer a satellite from a low Earth orbit to a higher geosynchronous orbit.
2. Satellites use onboard propulsion to circularize their orbit at apogee and achieve the final geostationary position.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. With reference to Urea Gold, consider the following statements:

1. It is a new variety of Urea fertilizer coated in potassium.
2. It is more economical and efficient than neem coated urea.

Select the correct statements using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Which of the following statements about Sambhar Lake is true?

- (a) It drains into the Arabian Sea
- (b) It is the largest inland salt lake in India
- (c) It was formed due to hypervelocity impact of a comet
- (d) It is the highest lake in India

Q5. Water Lettuce, recently seen in news, is known for being:

- (a) A medicinal herb
- (b) An invasive species
- (c) Biofertiliser
- (d) Fodder crop

Answers:

1. A
2. C
3. B
4. B
5. B