

5. Sukhna Lake

Prelims Syllabus: Rights Issues

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Punjab and Haryana high court has declared Sukhna Lake a “living entity” or “legal person” with rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

About:

- The Chandigarh administration has been directed to declare it a wetland within a period of three months.
- It declared all citizens of Chandigarh as loco parentis (in the place of a parent) to save the lake from extinction.
- It is passed in a 2009 Suo motu petition initiated amid depleting water level in the lake.
- Chandigarh should ensure that the average capacity of the lake is increased by at least about 100-150 hectare by one-time large scale desilting.
- **Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh** have also been told to lower the storage capacity of the check dams to ensure regular flow of water into the lake.

About Polluter Pays Principle:

- The States should have taken precautionary measures to save the catchment of Sukhna lake. It is the duty of the States of Punjab and Haryana to restore the catchment area. The State government has also failed to take precautionary measures to save the catchment area. The damage caused to the catchment area is enormous.
- **Legal Entity:** It means entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law.

About Sukhna Lake:

- It is man-made lake which was built in 1958 by Le Corbusier, the architect of Chandigarh.
- It is located in the foothills of the Shivalik Hills; it was designed to collect runoff water from the Hills.
- It is in the process of being officially notified as a wetland, also has a nearby wildlife sanctuary that is home to sambar, pangolin, wild boars, red jungle fowl, cobras and other species.

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- In Uttarkhand high court, justice Sharma was part of a bench in 2017, which declared the Ganga and Yamuna as living entities, a verdict that was later stayed by the Supreme Court.
 - In 2018, a bench presided over by justice Sharma had accorded the status of “legal person or entity” to animals in Haryana.
 - In 2019, the Punjab and Haryana High Court had ruled that all animals, birds and aquatic life in Haryana would be accorded the status of legal persons or entities.

