Lake Biwa

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in News?

A nearly intact pottery vessel, dating back over 10,000 years, was found at the bottom of Lake Biwa in Japan.

- **Recent Discovery -** It is one of the oldest known pottery artifacts in the world, was recovered from an underwater site long believed to hold the secrets of Japan's ancient past.
- Measuring 25 centimeters tall, this ancient artifact, believed to have been crafted by early Jomon-period societies, offers a rare and invaluable glimpse into **prehistoric Japan**.
- **Lake Biwa** – It is the **largest freshwater lake in Japan**, located entirely within Shiga Prefecture in west-central Honshu.
- **Maximum depth - ~104 m** (the northern basin is deep and mesotrophic; the southern basin is shallower and more eutrophic).
- **Shoreline length - ~235 km** — long enough that cycling around it at ~20 km/h would take over 10 hours.
- **Inflow/outflow -** Hundreds of rivers and streams (catchment area is large); there is one natural outlet, the Seta River (which later becomes part of the Yodo River system) — linking to the sea.
- **Lake age -** Lake Biwa is among the world's ancient lakes. Its geological history spans several million years.
- Because of its long geological age and stable freshwater environment, Lake Biwa supports **rich biodiversity** many aquatic plants, animals, fish, molluscs, birds, and more.
- Lake Biwa and its wetlands have protections; it's part of a quasi-national park/wildlife sanctuary.
- Since 1993 the lake is designated under the ***Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance.***
- **Historical Significance - Lake Biwa's unique geography** plays a critical role in preserving submerged artifacts.

- The lake’s valley-like depression and the ongoing tectonic movements around the site have kept the artifacts in situ, preserving them for thousands of years.
- As researchers continue to explore the lakebed, they are uncovering additional clues about the lives of the early people who lived around Lake Biwa, including other pottery vessels and even ancient fishing tools.

Reference

Indian Defence Review | Lake Biwa

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