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## Special Category Status

**Syllabus: GS Paper II- Centre-state Relation**

### Why In News?

With a coalition government at the Centre, the call for special category status (SCS) for Bihar has gained momentum.

### What is Special Category Status (SCS)?

- **Special Category Status** is a **classification granted** to some **States** by the Centre to assist development, based on geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.
- The **scheme** was **introduced in 1969** on the **recommendation** of the **Fifth Finance Commission**.
- SCS has been **granted** in the past by the **National Development Council (NDC)** to certain states.
- **Five factors** that are **considered** before **granting SCS** to a State:
  - Hilly and difficult terrain
  - Low population density and/or sizeable share of tribal population
  - Strategic location along international borders
  - Economic and infrastructural backwardness
  - Non-viable nature of State finances
- In **1969**, three States i.e. **Jammu & Kashmir, Assam and Nagaland**, were **granted the SCS**.
  - Since Article 370 has been scrapped and J&K has become a union territory, **SCS doesn't apply to J&K anymore**.
- Later, eight more States including Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand were given the SCS.
- The **Constitution** does **not include** any **provision** for the **categorization** of any state in India as a **SCS**.

### What are the benefits attached to Special Category Status (SCS)?

- A wide range of provisions are available to these states that have been listed under Articles **371, 371-A to 371-H, and 371-J**. These are such as:
- SCS States receive **Centre-State funding** from **centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)** in the ratio of **90:10**, which is more favourable than general category States.
- The **allotted money** for **CSS**, if not spent, lapse for the normal states, but in the case of **SCS** it is **carried forward**.
- These states are also given **preferential treatment** in **allocation of central funds assistance**.
- They also receive other benefits like **concessions in customs, excise duties, income and corporate tax rates** etc.

### Why is Bihar demanding the SCS?

- The **demand** was **based** on the findings from the "**Bihar Caste-based Survey, 2022**", which revealed that nearly one-third of its population continues to live in poverty.
- The **poverty** and **backwardness** of the State are **blamed** on the **lack of natural resources**, unreliable supply of water for irrigation, regular floods and severe droughts in the State.
- The **bifurcation of the State** led to the **shifting of industries** to **Jharkhand** and created a dearth of employment and investment opportunities.
- With a **per-capita GDP** of around **₹54,000**, Bihar has consistently been one of the poorest States.

Thus, the granting of SCS to Bihar will help the state get about ₹2.5 lakh crore required to fund various welfare measures over the next five years.

## Other States Demanding Special Category Status (SCS) Seeking SCS

- **Andhra Pradesh** and **Odisha** have also sought SCS.
- **Andhra Pradesh** has asked for SCS on the **basis of shrunken fiscal space and revenue loss** due to its capital city Hyderabad going to Telangana.
- **Odisha** has **demanded the SCS tag**, on the basis of its **climate change related vulnerabilities**.

## Central Government Stand

- The **14th Finance Commission** had taken the decision to **abolish SCS status**, offering an **exception** only to the **northeastern region and three hill states**.
- The **Centre**, referring to the 14th FC's report, has consistently **denied these demands**.

Although these states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha) meet most of the criteria for the grant of SCS, it does not fulfil the requirement of hilly terrain and geographically difficult areas. In 2013, the **Raghuram Rajan Committee** set up by the Centre, placed Bihar in the "least developed category" and suggested a new methodology based on a 'multi-dimensional index' for devolving funds, which can be revisited to address the State's socio-economic backwardness.

Q. Examine the demand for Special Category Status (SCS) for Bihar, considering both its potential benefits and limitations. Should the central government grant SCS to Bihar? Justify your answer. (250 Words /15 Marks)

## Post Office Act, 2023

**Syllabus: GS Paper II-Government Policies & Interventions**

### Why in the News?

The Post Office Act recently came into force, **replacing the Indian Post Office Act, 1898**, which has been in **existence for 125 years**.

### About the Post Office Act

- The **Indian Post Office Act, 1898**, **regulated India Post**, a departmental undertaking of the central government.
- The 2023 act "**consolidated and amended the law relating to the Post Office in India.**"

## Highlights of the Post Office Act 2023

- The **Director General of Postal Services** will be appointed to head **India Post**.
  - He will have powers to make regulations on various matters including tariffs for services and supply of postage stamps.
- The Act **allows the interception of articles transmitted via post**.
  - **Grounds for interception:** Security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergency, public safety, or contravention of the provisions of the act or any other laws.
- The **officer-in-charge** appointed by the Central government is **empowered to 'intercept, open or detain' any postal article** on the above-mentioned grounds.
  - Such an item can also be disposed of by the government in such a manner as it deems appropriate.
- The **Central government** can **empower any officer** of the **Post Office** to **deliver a postal article suspected** of containing any **prohibited item** to the **customs authority** or any other specified authority.
- The act **exempts the Post Office from incurring any liability** pertaining to its services, unless the officer has acted fraudulently, or wilfully caused any loss, delay, or mis-delivery of service.
- The act **specifies only one penalty** i.e. unpaid amount by users can be recovered as arrears of land revenue.
- The **Act**, for the **first time**, **regulates private courier services** by bringing it under its ambit.



## Law Commission's recommendations regarding the Indian Post Office Act, 1898

- The 1898 Act **permits interception** on the grounds of 'public emergency'.
- While examining the Act, the Law Commission of India in its **38th report** pointed out that since the **term 'emergency'** has **not** been **explicitly defined**, it provides a wide ground for **interception**, thus **violating article 21 and 19(1)**.
- The Commission also **highlighted** that a **state of public emergency** must be of **such** that it is **not secretive** and is apparent to a reasonable man.
- It **recommended** that the **legislature** should **amend** the **existing laws** relating to interception to **ensure** that they **adhere** to the **Constitution**.

These recommendations led to the enactment of the Telegraph (**Amendment**) Act of 1981.

## Supreme Court rulings on Right to Privacy

- In *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India (1996)*, the **constitutionality** of the **Telegraph Act** was **challenged** for **permitting telephonic interception** without any due process guarantees.
  - The Supreme Court in its verdict held that **phone-tapping** without appropriate safeguards, and without following legal process, was a violation of individuals' fundamental right to privacy.
- In *Justice KS Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)*, the Supreme Court unanimously declared the **right to privacy** to be a **fundamental right** of all Indians.
  - The verdict stipulated that any state measure that proposes to interfere with the right to privacy must satisfy certain requirements —
    - **Legality**, the measure is authorized by statute;
    - **Legitimate goal**, the measure

pursues a proper purpose;

- **Suitability**, the measure takes meaningful steps towards achieving the proper purpose;
- **Necessity**, the measure is the least rights-restrictive measure amongst equally effective alternatives;
- **Proportionality**, the measure does not disproportionately impact individual rights;
- **Procedural safeguards**, the measure incorporates meaningful guardrails against possible abuse.

## Criticisms against the Post Office Act 2023

- The Opposition had criticized the act, stating that despite promising to update the colonial law, it **keeps** the most **draconian provisions** that it contained
- The Act **ignores SC's judgment and concerns**, the **Law Commission's recommendations**.
- The law is criticized on the grounds of **violating the right to privacy** of the citizens.
- The law **does not clarify** the **grounds for interception**.
  - For instance, the word **'Emergency'** has **not been defined**, giving unbridled powers to authorities.
- **No clarity on how authority in-charge** of interception will be **elected**.
- It is also pointed out that the act **fails to specify the procedure for interception**, thus making it arbitrary in nature.
- The act, in the absence of guidelines, **violates Articles 14, & 19(1)(a)**, of the Constitution.
- The act suffers from the **"Big Brother syndrome"** and allows the **government to monitor citizens**.
- The act does **not provide any grievance redressal mechanism to citizens** despite relieving post officers of any liability with regard to the services offered.

The Post Office Act, 2023 holds promise for modernizing India's postal system. While some concerns remain, especially regarding privacy, the overall impact of the act is expected to be positive. The Act is expected to potentially improve service delivery, expand offerings, and ensure India Post remains relevant in the digital age.

Q. Critically evaluate the Post Office Act, 2023, with a focus on its potential impact on India's postal system. (150 Words /10 Marks)

## Assam Handloom Sector\*\*

**Syllabus: GS Paper V -Economy of Assam**

### Why In News?

The newly appointed Union Minister of State for Textiles and External Affairs highlighted the potential of Assam in the handloom sector.

### History of handloom Sector in Assam

- Handloom based weaving is a centuries old activity in Assam.
- The **Arthasastra** mentioned about the **varieties of textile** commodities in **Ancient Assam**.
- The **Harsa Charita** and **Kalika Purana** also mentioned that **fine cotton garments** were used in **ancient days in Assam**.
- The **Tantis**, a separate **professional caste** in the Hindu society, was **associated with weaving** prior to the advent of the Ahoms.
- A **golden history** of the **handloom Sector began in medieval Assam** from the coming of the Ahoms into Assam in 1228 A. D.
- **Handloom** based activities became an **indispensable profession** of every **Assamese household** during the days of the **Ahom regime**.

### Different Varieties of Assam Silks

- **Muga:** It is a naturally golden fabric produced only in Assam. Its shimmering beauty and durability have earned it the title of "liquid gold."
- **Eri:** Often called "peace silk," Eri is a lustrous fabric made from the cocoon of the eri worm. Known for its warmth and comfort, Eri is perfect for winter wear.
- **Paat:** Made from the golden-yellow fibre of the mulberry plant, Paat silk is known for its lightweight and breathable qualities.

### Significance of Handloom Sector in Assam

- **Globally Famous:** Assam's Muga and Eri silk has great demand in Europe, USA, Japan, South Africa, Middle East etc, contributing significantly to India's total exports.
- **Cultural Significance:** Handloom is inexorably linked with the culture and heritage of Assam.
- **Livelihood generation:** Being a labor-intensive industry, the sector is the second-largest source of employment to people next to agriculture in Assam.
  - As per 4th National Handloom Census 2019-20, more than 12.83 lakh weavers and 12.46 lakh handlooms are available in the state.
- **Women empowerment:** The sector helps in economic empowerment of women in the state as it is one of the major sources of income for rural women.
  - There are about 11.79 lakh female weavers in the state.
- **Income Source:** The industry for generations has been a source of additional income for weavers and their families, contributing significantly to the state's economy.
- **Contribution in national movement:** The sector contributed to Gandhiji's Swadeshi and Khadi movement by fostering self-reliance, and supporting rural economies.

- Gandhiji once commented “*Assamese women weave fairy tales in their clothes.*”
- **Sustainable Practices:** Most of the rural handloom processes are eco-friendly, using natural dyes and locally sourced materials aligning with growing global interest in sustainable production.

## Challenges faced by Handloom sector in Assam

- **Rise of middlemen** is a significant issue in the handloom sector as middle men takes away the maximum margin
- **Stiff competition from the cheap power loom products** is making handloom weaving a less remunerative profession.
- The **Dilution of The Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act of 1985** blur the lines between handloom and power loom products.
  - Earlier 22 items were reserved for Handloom which has been reduced to 11.
- **Impact of climate Change:** Increasing pollution level and change in temperature and precipitation patterns can disrupt the life of muga and eri worms and growth of host plants.
- **Fluctuations in raw material prices, limited market access, low capital, unorganized production system,** etc are the other issues affecting the growth and development of Handloom sector in Assam.

## Initiatives taken to revive Handloom sector in Assam

- **Swanirbhar Nari initiative:** Direct procurement of hand-woven items by the government will be taken up to ensure fair pricing and better profit margins for the artisans.
- **GI tag** is given to **Gamosa** and **Muga silk** to protect the unique identity of products and promote their authenticity.
- The State **Government** promotes

handloom gamosa by **urging** people to **buy Handloom Gamosa.**

- **Strict implementation of the Handlooms Act of 1985** to reserve certain products for production by handlooms, thereby safeguarding the livelihood of handloom weavers.
- Granting **official trademark to Sualkuchi silk** to end the circulation of fakes in the market.
- **Sualkuchi** has been **designated as a Handloom Heritage Village** to promote it as a significant tourist destination in Assam.
- **North east region textile** promotion scheme is an umbrella scheme implemented to promote the textiles industry in the North-East Region.
- The **Assam silk outreach mission** was launched to promote the emergence of a vibrant silk Industry through application of Technology, Motivation and demonstration.
- The recently established **Golden silk park** in Resham nagar, Guwahati and **Bodoland Silk Park** in Kokrajhar is aimed to promote Assam’s silk industry.

## Contribution of Hemoprova Chutia in Assam Handloom sector

- **Hemoprova Chutia** is a well-known **handloom weaver** and **artist** from **Assam** who received the prestigious **Padma Shri** in 2023.
- Hemoprova was **born in Photikachowa Abhoypuria Village** in district Dibrugarh.
- She has **woven the Gunamala** by Srimanta Sankardeva, **Namgukha** by Madhabdeva and the **Bhagwat Gita** in a distinctive style on her handloom.
- She **created four distinct clothes** using her handloom to **weave out the entire text** of these **books**.
  - This is called **Barnab Astra** in **Assamese.**
- Her work has helped in **preserving and promoting traditional Assamese weaving** methods that might otherwise be lost.

- Her **contribution ensured** the **continuation** of this **rich cultural heritage** for future generations.
- She received various **honours** including the **Assam Gourav** given by the Assam government in 2022 (one of the highest civilian awards provided by the Government of Assam).

## Way Forward

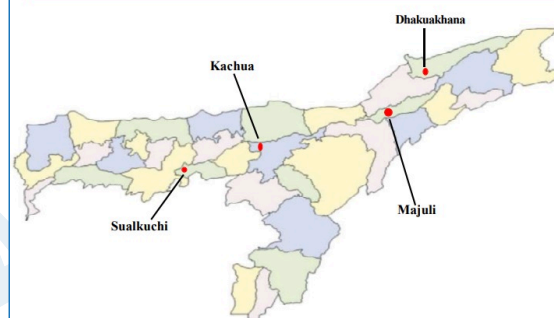
- Given the huge wedding industry of India, **GI tag** should be awarded to the world renowned **Assamese bridal paat wear**.
- As the handloom sector plays an important role in the economy of Assam, it should be considered a **sunrise industry in Assam**.
- The focus of the sector should be on **embracing technological innovation** while **preserving tradition**.
- **Incorporating contemporary designs** and utilizing **online platforms** for marketing, weavers can reach a wider audience.

## Fact-Sheet: Assam's handloom sector

- **Assam** has around **1.3 million handlooms**, while the entire country has only around 3.5 million.
- **Assam** contributes **99 % of Muga silk** and **63 % of Eri silk** in the country's total production of Muga and Eri, respectively.
- Assam has the **highest number of looms** in the country as indicated by the 4th Handloom Census Report.
- About **one-third of Assam's weavers** are **organized** into about **3,744 societies** registered under handloom cooperative societies
- **Sualkuchi**, also known as '**Manchester of Assam**', is the **largest silk producing village** of Assam.
  - It is **one of the world's largest weaving villages**.

- The major weaving districts of vanya (wild) silks are **Kamrup (Rural), Nalbari, Udalguri, Baksa, Kokrajhar, Nagaon, Morigaon, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Golaghat, and Mangaldoi**.
- Apart from Assam's exotic silks, **tribal weaves** such as **Mirijim Handloom** of **Majuli** and **north-eastern Assam**, **shawls of Karbi Anglong** and **Dima Hasao**, **Lasingphee blankets of bamboo** and **cotton** in **southern Assam's Cachar** are equally popular.

## Major Handloom Producing Centres



Q. Discuss the significance of the Handloom sector in Assam. Also highlight the Contribution of Hemoprova Chutia in this regard. (15 marks/ 250 words)



## India-Bangladesh

**Syllabus: GS Paper II & GS V-International Relations**

### Why In News?

The Indian Prime Minister, recently, held extensive talks with his visiting Bangladeshi counterpart to enhance cooperation in diverse areas including trade and connectivity.

### More About the News

- The two sides signed key pacts one on forging strong ties in the **digital domain** and another on having a “**green partnership**”.
- The two sides also signed an agreement on **railway connectivity**.

### Areas of Cooperation Between India and Bangladesh

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Economic Partnership</b></p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilateral Trade between both the countries stood at \$15.9 billion in FY 2022-23.</li> <li>• Bangladesh is India’s biggest trade partner in South Asia and India is the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh in Asia.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>People to People ties</b></p>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border Haat, Suborno Jayanti Scholarships to students of Bangladesh and shared history and cultural ties strengthen people to people ties</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Regional Cooperation</b></p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both the countries are engaged in various multilateral forums such as SAARC, BIMSTEC and IORARC etc.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Defence &amp; Security Cooperation</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is active cooperation between both countries to combat illicit drug trafficking, fake currency, human trafficking, etc.</li> <li>• Both countries participate in annual Defence Dialogue and Military exercises such as Sampriti and Milan.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Development cooperation projects</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At present Bangladesh is the largest development partner of India.</li> <li>• India has extended 4 Lines of Credits (LOC) to Bangladesh in the last 8 years.</li> <li>• Three Indian assisted development cooperation projects were recently inaugurated in Bangladesh. These projects are                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Akhaura-Agartala cross border rail link,</li> <li>• Khulna-Mongla Port rail line</li> <li>• Unit II of Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Factoring Assam in India-Bangladesh relations

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Shared Border and History</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assam shares a 263 Kms long border with Bangladesh, and the two regions have deep-rooted historical and cultural connections.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Security Concerns</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assam has been affected by cross-border insurgency, drug trafficking, smuggling etc.</li> <li>The Bangladesh government's active cooperation in addressing these issues has enhanced security in Assam.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Economic Potential</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assam is a gateway to the Northeast and a potential hub for trade and commerce with Bangladesh.</li> <li>Export of Assam's tea and other agricultural products to Bangladesh is boosting Assam's export earnings.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Connectivity Initiatives</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various infrastructure projects have improved connectivity between Assam and Bangladesh, facilitating trade and tourism.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Cultural Exchange</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The shared cultural heritage between Assam and Bangladesh is evident in language, traditions, and cuisine.</li> <li>Cultural exchange programs like the Silchar-Sylhet festival, border huts promote people-to-people contact and strengthen bilateral ties.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Energy Cooperation</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, transporting diesel from Assam to Bangladesh, showcases the potential of Assam in Indo-Bangladesh energy cooperation.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Act East Policy</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assam's engagement with Bangladesh aligns with India's Act East Policy, which aims to enhance ties with Southeast Asian nations.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Water sharing agreement</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water from the Kushiara river (transboundary river b/w Bangladesh-Assam) to be shared with Bangladesh.</li> </ul>   |

### About Bangladesh

- It is a **South Asian country**, located in the **delta of the Padma (Ganga) and Jamuna (Brahmaputra)** rivers in the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent.
- It is **bordered by** the Indian states of **West Bengal** to the **west** and **north**, **Assam** to the **north**, **Meghalaya** to the **north** and **northeast**, and **Tripura** and **Mizoram** to the **east**.
- To the **southeast**, it **shares a boundary with Myanmar**.
- The **southern part** of the **country** opens into the **Bay of Bengal**.
  - Assam-Bangladesh** boundary stretches to a total **4 districts** which includes **Karimganj, Cachar, Dhubri, South salmara** **mankachar**.



Q. Evaluate the role of Assam in the cultural and people-to-people exchanges between India and Bangladesh. (150 Words /10 Marks)

## Group of 7

**Syllabus: GS Paper II-International Groupings**

### Why In News?

The Leaders of the Group of Seven, recently met in Italy's Apulia region for the 50th G7 Summit, with India being invited to the outreach 11 times.

### About G7

- The G7 is the 'group of 7' of the **largest advanced economies** in the world getting together to address international economic and monetary issues.
- They account for close to **60 % of global net wealth, 46 % of global GDP**, and **10 % of the world's population**.
- The G7 countries consist of the **U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Japan**.
- The **G7**, originally the G8 (before Russia was uninvited), was **set up in 1975** as a **response** to the **1973 oil shocks** and the corresponding **financial crisis**.
- G7 is **not based on a treaty** and has **no permanent secretariat or office**.



## Key Highlights of G7 Summit 2024

- G7 Summit 2024 discussions **centred on several global conflicts** including the **Russia-Ukraine war** and the **Israel-Hamas conflict**.
- In a significant move, the **US and Ukraine signed a 10-year security agreement** to bolster Ukraine's defence against Russia.
- The G7 leaders also agreed to a **\$50 billion loan package for Ukraine**, utilizing interest from Russia's frozen central bank assets as collateral.
- The UK announced **new sanctions** focusing on **entities** involved in **supplying military goods to Russia**.
  - These sanctions **aim to weaken Russia's war capabilities** in Ukraine.

## Importance of India for G7

- **Countering China:** Increasing tensions with China have highlighted the need for restructuring the global economic order to reduce dependence on China.
  - This is where India comes in.
- **US and Europe's Strategy:** The US and Europe are seeking to reconnect with the Global South, where India plays a key role, as it is a key member of the Global South.
- **India's Role:** India's participation in the G7 summit underscores its growing importance to the G7 nations.
- **Economic Growth:** Moreover, India's steady economic growth is positioning it as a key player to the G7 countries.
- **Geopolitical Importance:** India's role as a "swing state" in global geopolitics enhances its strategic value to the West.

## Significance of the G7 for India

- **Reforming Global Institutions:** G7 has significant influence over global institutions and India's engagement with G7 can enable India to advocate for reforming global institutions.
- **Strengthening Relations:** The G7 provides a platform for India to strengthen

ties with leading global economies.

- **Global Mediator Role:** Participating in G7 summits helps India position itself as a global mediator, regional manager, and showcase its achievements and outlook.
- **Economic restructuring:** G7 helps India to discuss economic restructuring and supply chain diversification.
- **Technological Cooperation:** G7 focuses on enhanced technological cooperation with trusted partners, which is crucial for India's economic prospects.

## Criticism against G7

- **Exclusive and Closed Group:** Many nations and critics have criticized G7 for being an exclusive, closed group that exercises their power over other nations.
- **Outdated:** The G7 has also been criticized for being outdated in recent decades as its exclusion of two of the world's largest economies India and China.
- **Ineffective:** Critics argue the G7 talks extensively and achieves too little on complex challenges like trade, climate etc.
- **Concern over internal cooperation:** Concerns have been voiced regarding the G7's ability to achieve cooperation within the group.
- **Legitimacy:** Questions have been raised about the G7's right to make decisions impacting non-member countries.



## Urban Flood in Guwahati\*\*

### Syllabus: GS Paper V- Environment

#### Why In News?

As cleaning of drains is intensified in Guwahati to prevent waterlogging during the rainy season, it highlights the issue of urban flooding in Guwahati.

#### What is Urban Flood?

- Urban flooding refers to the **inundation of land or property** in a built environment, particularly in more densely populated areas like cities.
- Urban flooding is one of the most recurrent **hydro-meteorological disasters** presently in the world.
- It occurs when the **capacity of urban infrastructure to handle water is exceeded**, leading to waterlogging and submergence of streets, homes, and public spaces.

#### Urban Flood in Guwahati

- **Urban flooding** is a **recurring problem** in Guwahati, the largest city in the northeastern state of Assam, particularly during the monsoon season.
- Over **40%** of the **Guwahati Municipal Corporation area** is **vulnerable to flood damage**.

#### Causes of Urban Flood in Guwahati

##### Natural Factors:

- **Bowl-Shaped City:** Guwahati is surrounded by 18 hills which causes rainwater along with siltation to naturally flow down into the city, like a bowl.
- **Brahmaputra and its tributaries:** The relentless force of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries causes extensive erosion in the upstream areas and deposits sediments downstream, in regions like Guwahati.
  - This deposition reduces the river's carrying capacity, causing water levels to rise and overflow into the city.
  - Since 1950, the Brahmaputra and its tributaries have eroded over 7.40% of Assam's area.
- **Monsoon Impact:** There has also been an increase in extreme rainfall events resulting in more rainfall in a short

duration which often leads to waterlogging and flooding in the city.

##### Anthropogenic Factors:

- **Poor Solid Waste Management:** Improper disposal of solid waste often clogs the drains and obstruct the flow of water, leading to waterlogging and flooding.
- **Drainage Issues:** Rapid urbanization and outdated drainage system, contribute to the severe flooding every year.
  - Except for the 17 km of drains built between 1973 and 1997, no other extensive and planned drainage network exists in the Guwahati Metropolitan Area.
- **Encroachments:** The encroachments of riverbeds, wetlands and drainage channels, disrupt the natural flow of water, causing the issue of urban flooding.
- **Unregulated Sand Mining:** Unregulated sand mining in the Brahmaputra River also contributes to urban flooding in Guwahati.
  - Excessive sand mining can disrupt the natural flow and sediment balance of rivers, leading to alteration of Riverbeds, erosion and sedimentation.
- **Poor Urban Planning:** Poor urban planning has resulted in the unscientific construction of buildings, roads, and other infrastructure that hinders the natural flow of water and contributes to flooding.
  - Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) has confirmed that the human-induced landscape disruption is the main cause of increase in the frequency and intensity of floods in Assam.
- **Impact of Deforestation:** The destruction of forests, wetlands, and green spaces reduces the ability of the land to absorb water, due to which water runs off quickly and accumulates in urban areas.
  - According to data from Global Forest Watch, Kamrup Metropolitan witnessed a significant loss in tree cover from 2001 to 2023, amounting to 1.25 thousand hectares.

## Impact of Urban Flood

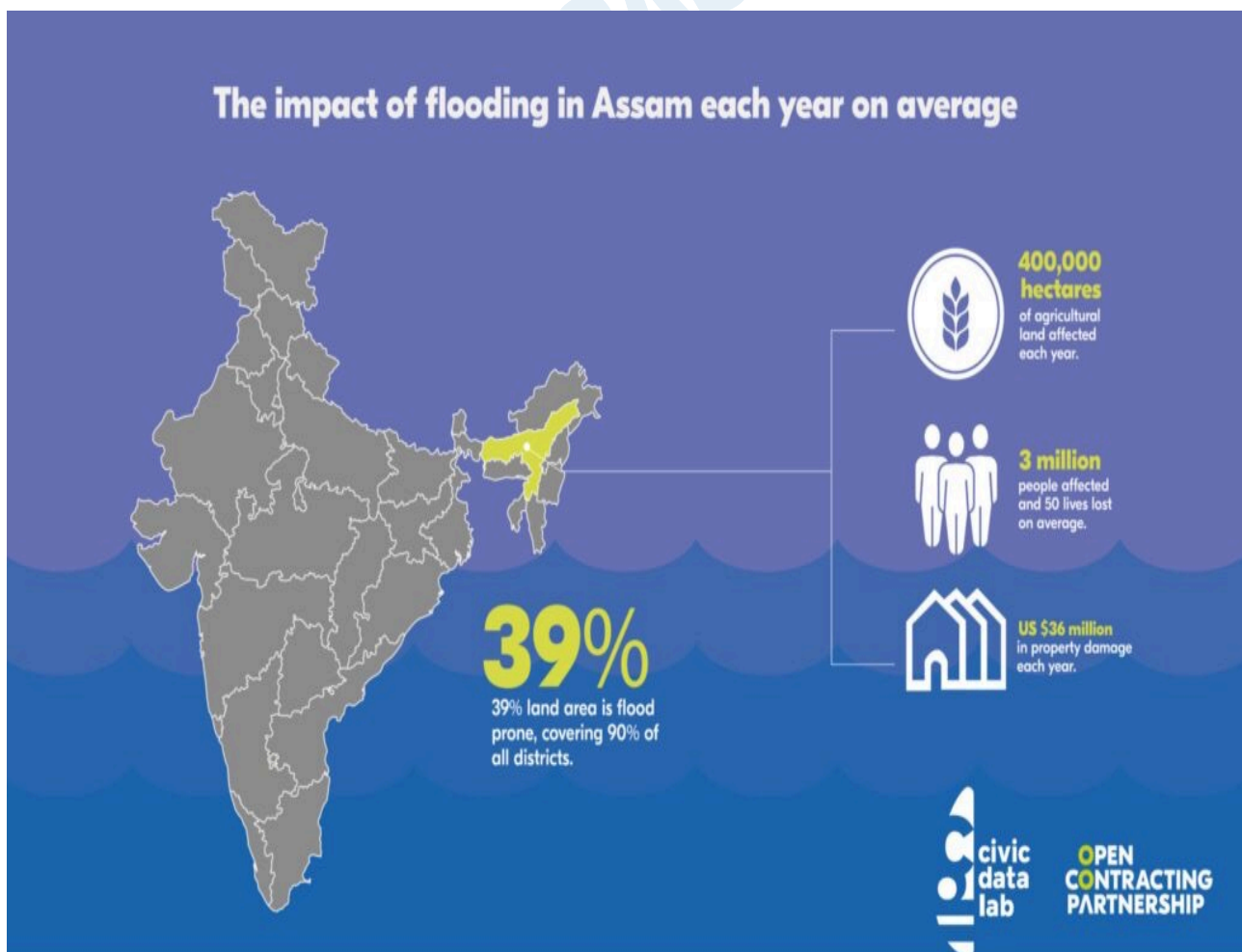
- **Loss of Life & Injuries:** People get trapped, electrocuted, swept away, or injured during floods.
- **Widespread Damage:** Flood causes damage to property and infrastructure, and destruction of crops and livestock.
- **Large Scale Displacement:** Floods force people to flee their homes, often losing belongings.
- **Disruption of Essential Services:** Power, water, and communication networks can be knocked out.
- **Disease Outbreaks:** Contaminated flood water spreads waterborne illnesses.
- **Environmental Damage:** Erosion, pollution, and harm to ecosystems occur.

## Steps taken to Mitigate Urban Flood

- To mitigate the urban artificial flood the Guwahati Development Department

initiated '**Mission Flood Free Guwahati**' with all the allied departments and stakeholders.

- The GMDA has **undertaken projects** for the **development of Silsako Beel** to increase its stormwater retention capacity, dredging for de-siltation and cleaning of drains.
- In order to improve Guwahati's waste management capabilities, GMC has launched 2 **advanced mechanized road sweeping machines** and 60 **e-Light Commercial Vehicles (E-LCVs)** for **door-to-door waste collection**.
  - **Guwahati** became the **first city** in the country to **utilize e-LCVs** for **household garbage collection**.
- Government has set up **permanent pumping stations, mobile dewatering pumps** alongside the **sluice gates** to tackle the floods.



## Way Forward

- Centre's suggestion regarding **construction** of at least **50 large ponds** to **divert** the **Brahmaputra River** water should be implemented.
- **Climate-proofing Guwahati's drains** is required to enhance the efficiency of the existing drainage system.
- **Proper implementation** of the **Tahal Report recommendations** would prevent the urban flood to a large extent.
  - **Tahal Report** is the most **comprehensive report on Guwahati's drainage** and sewage network.
- There is a need to set up a **dedicated stormwater** and **sewage network**.
- **Flood hazard monitoring** and **mapping** is required for risk management.
- **International best practices** like Sponge City of China, mobile wall of Germany, water-sensitive design of Australia can be **adopted**.
- The **surviving wetlands** should be **proactively maintained**, through effective implementation of the Guwahati Water Bodies Act.
- Steps should be taken to **curb unplanned deforestation** along with the **prevention of encroachment on hillslopes**.
- **Roads** should be **constructed with permeable materials** that allow the water to infiltrate into the groundwater aquifers.
- Property owners should be **encouraged to install green roofs, rainwater harvesting tanks, and on-site attenuation tanks**.
- Schemes like **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)**, **National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)**, and **smart cities mission** can be used to develop flood free cities.

## Heatwaves

**Syllabus: GS Paper III- Climate Change**

### Why in the News?

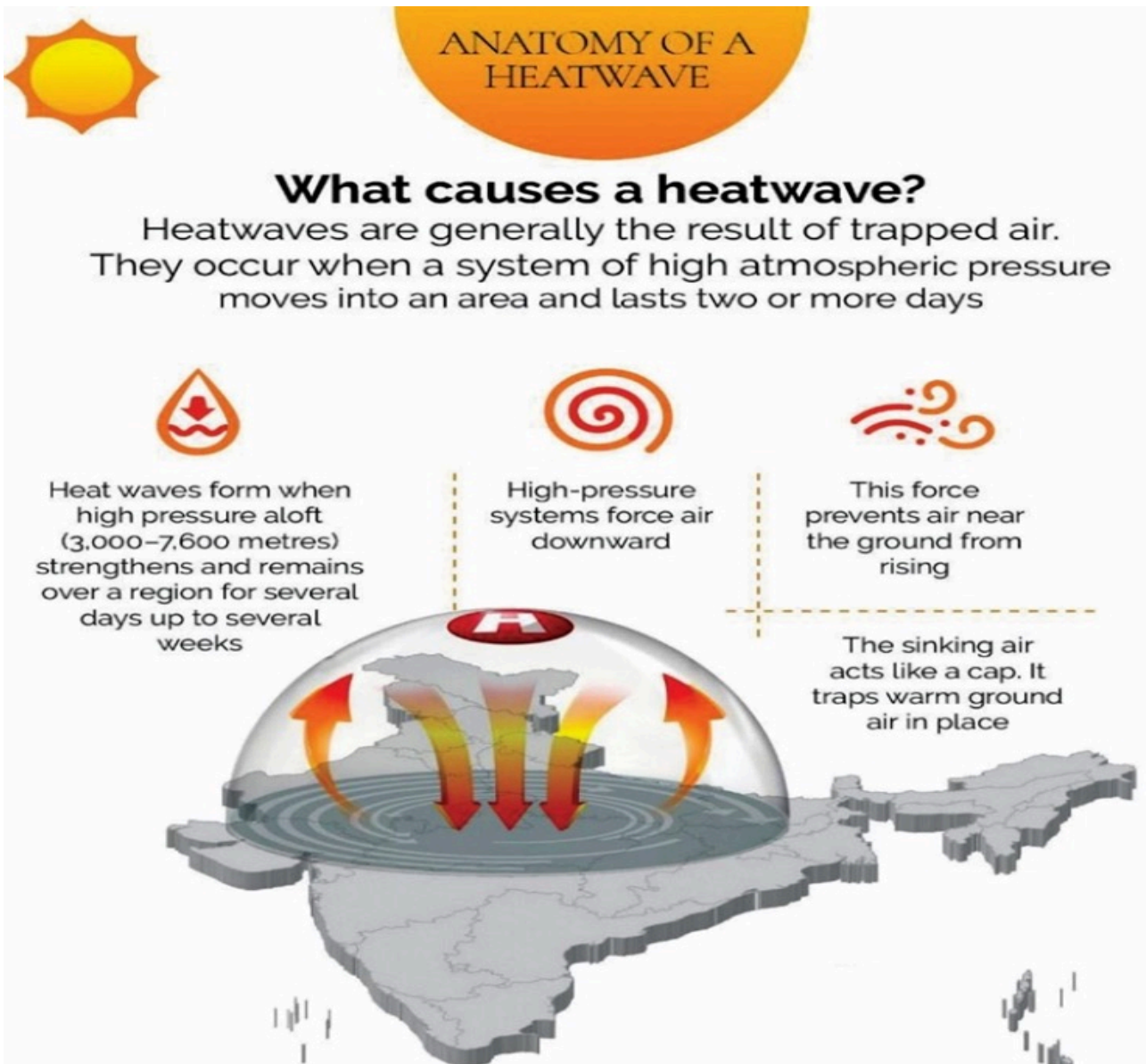
The occurrence of extreme heat in many parts of the country has once again brought into light the discussions on the inclusion of heatwaves as one of the notified disasters under the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005.

### About Heat Waves

- According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), a heat wave occurs when the ambient temperature in a region deviates by at least 4.5-6.4°C from the long-term average, or when the maximum temperature crosses 45°C (or 37°C at a hill-station).

**The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has given the following criteria for Heat Waves:**

- Heat waves need not be considered till the **maximum temperature** of a station **reaches** at least **40°C for Plains** and at least **30°C for Hilly regions**.
- When the **normal maximum temperature** of a station is **less than or equal to 40°C** Heat Wave Departure from normal is **5°C to 6°C Severe Heat Wave Departure** from normal is 7°C or more.
- When the **normal maximum temperature** of a station is **more than 40°C** Heat Wave Departure from normal is **4°C to 5°C Severe Heat Wave Departure** from normal is 6°C or more.
- When **actual maximum temperature** remains **45°C** or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature, **heat waves** should be **declared**.



## Impacts of Heat Waves

- **Agriculture crisis:** Crop yields in India have reduced due to heat stress.
  - Across India, wheat production could be down 6-7% due to heat waves.
- **Marine ecosystems:** Millions of fish have washed up dead in southeastern Australia.
  - It is caused by depleted oxygen levels in the river after hot weather.
- **Labor productivity:** Marginal Labours are the worst impacted during heat waves in India.
- **Externalities:** Heat waves put additional pressure on the global food market, due to delay in production and distribution of grains.
- **Threat to Livestock:** Researchers at Cornell University estimate that, by 2100, milk yields in India could drop by 25% (against 2005 levels) in arid and semi-arid dairy farming due to increased heat stress.
- **Electricity consumption:** Higher electricity consumption, leads to power shortages and increased costs.
- **Food shortage:** The risks to health and food production will be made more severe due to food production losses exacerbated by heat-induced labour productivity losses.
- **Adverse Health:** It leads to dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke.



## What are notified disasters?

- **Notified disasters** are those specific calamities that are **officially recognized/listed** by the government under the **Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005**.
- If any of the **recognised calamity** happens, then the **provisions** of the **DM Act** can be **invoked**.
- **These disasters qualify** for **relief assistance** under the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** and the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)**.
  - The money in these funds cannot be used for any purpose other than response and management of notified disasters.
- Currently, there are **12 categories** of disasters which are **notified under this Act**.
  - These are **cyclones, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, and frost and cold waves**.

## Why are Heatwaves not notified as disasters?

- Even though **India is traditionally prone to Heatwaves** and heat-related illnesses and deaths have been common in India, still **these are not viewed as a disaster**.
- It is because **heatwaves** are a **common occurrence** during summer, and are **not an unusual weather event**.
- However, in the **last 15 years**, the **severity** and **frequency** of **heatwaves** have **increased**.
- At present there are around **23 states**, which are **vulnerable to heatwaves**.
- With the **frequency of heatwaves rising**, State, district, and cities have **prepared heat action plans (HAPs)**.
  - HAPs involve activities like creation of shaded spaces, ensuring availability of cool water in public places, distribution of simple oral solutions, and reorganizing the schedules of schools, colleges and office working hours.
- These **mitigation measures require**

**expenditure** but **state governments** have **not** been able to **use** the **SDRF** for them.

- This is the reason for the demand for inclusion of heatwaves as a notified disaster in the DM Act.

## Why is the Centre not adding heatwaves as a notified disaster?

There are primarily reasons for this:

- **Finance Commission Reluctance:** The 15th Finance Commission stated the existing list of notified disasters “covers the needs of the states to a large extent” and did not find merit to include heatwaves.
- **Practical Difficulties:** The main reason for not adding heatwave as a notified disaster is the potentially huge financial implication.
  - The government has to provide monetary compensation — Rs 4 lakh — for every life lost because of a disaster that is in the notified list.
- **Difficult to identify:** In most cases, heat itself does not claim lives as most people die due to other pre-existing conditions making it difficult to ascertain.
- **Administrative Challenges:** There are complexities in defining and measuring the intensity and impact of heatwaves, which makes it challenging to establish clear criteria for declaring disasters.

## Steps taken by Government to Mitigate Heatwaves

- The FC has allowed **states to utilize** at least a part of the **SDRF money** (up to 10%) for **“local disasters”** which states could notify on their own.
  - By using this provision, states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Kerala have added heat waves as local disasters.
- The **NDMA** and the **IMD** are **working** with 23 States to **develop HAPs** which will provide a snapshot of a region’s heat profile.
- Moreover, initiatives like **National action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC)**, **India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)** etc are implemented.

## How to mitigate the impact of Heatwaves?

- **Heat Waves Action Plan:** Robust disaster management policies are required in heatwave zones in order to safeguard human lives, livestock, and wildlife.
- **Role of State Government:** State leading role effective implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and sharing responsibility with other stakeholders is now the need of the hour.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Death from heat waves can be prevented by installing improved early warning systems that communicate heatwave threats, recommend different preventative measures, and constrain disaster impacts.
- **Accessibility and Afforestation:** Easing access to public drinking water, providing heat-proof shelter facilities in heatwave prone areas and afforestation programmes in urban and rural areas would help mitigate heat wave fatalities.
- **Nature-based solutions:** These should be taken into account like rejuvenation of rivers, ponds and canals and ancient Indian building designs.
- **Sustainable Cooling:** Passive cooling technology can be a vital alternative to address the urban heat island for residential and commercial buildings.
- **Replacing Dark Roofs:** Replacing dark surfaces with lighter and more reflective materials, it will result in a comparatively cooler environment.
- **Climate-Resilient Crops:** An ICAR project has been working on heat-resistant varieties and other techniques in 151 climate-risk-prone village clusters in north and west India.

## ADITYA-L1

**Syllabus: GS Paper III- Space Technology**

### Why in the News?

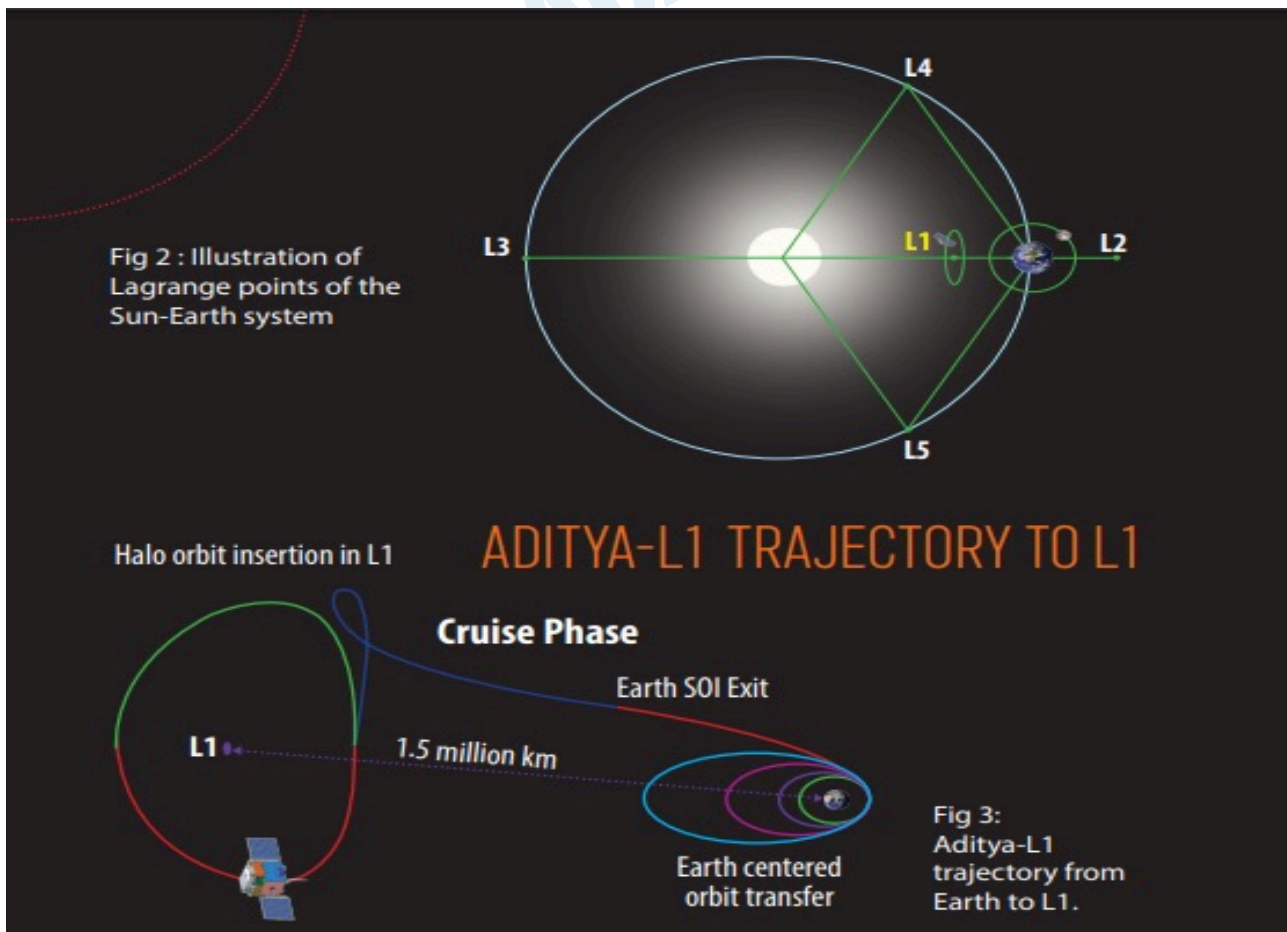
ISRO recently released images of Sun captured by Aditya-L1 during a solar storm

### More About the News

- These **images** were **captured by Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) and the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC)**.
  - Apart from capturing images, these payloads also made important observations.

### About Aditya-L1 Mission

- **Developed by ISRO**, it is the **first Indian mission** dedicated to **studying the Sun**.
- The spacecraft was **launched on September 2, 2023**, aboard a **PSLV-XL** launch vehicle.
- The Aditya L1 spacecraft is **placed in a halo orbit** around the **Lagrange point 1 (L1)** of the **Sun-Earth system**.
  - A **Lagrange point** is a **spot** where the **gravitational forces** of **two large objects** -the Sun and the Earth - **cancel each other out**, allowing a spacecraft to "hover".
  - For two body gravitational systems, there are a **total five Lagrange points** denoted as L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5.
  - **L1 point** provides an **unobstructed view of the Sun**, even during phenomena like an eclipse; it allows payloads to directly observe the Sun.



## Objective of the Mission

- To study **Coronal Heating** and **Solar Wind Acceleration**.
- To analyse initiation of **Coronal Mass Ejection (CME), flares and near-earth space weather**.
- To know more about the **dynamics of the solar atmosphere**.
- To understand **solar wind distribution and temperature anisotropy**.
- To understand and **predict space weather, monitor solar activity and UV radiation**.

## Pay Loads of the Mission

The Aditya-L1 mission carries a suite of seven scientific payloads to carry out systematic study of the Sun. They are:

- The **Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC)** studies the solar corona and dynamics of Coronal Mass Ejections.
- The **Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)** images the Solar Photosphere and Chromosphere in near Ultraviolet (UV).
- The **Aditya Solar Wind Particle EXperiment (ASPEX)** and **Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA)** study the solar wind and energetic ions.
- The **Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS)** and the **High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS)** studies the X-ray flares from the Sun.
- The **Magnetometer (MAG)** is capable of measuring interplanetary magnetic fields at the L1 point.

## Other solar missions

- **Solar Orbiter:** A joint project of ESA and NASA, launched to study the Sun's atmosphere and magnetic field in unprecedented detail.
- **Parker Solar Probe:** NASA mission. It is the first spacecraft to fly through the Sun's atmosphere, the corona.
- **Hinotori (ASTRO-A):** JAXA's, first solar observation satellite to study solar flares

using hard X-rays.

- **Hinode:** JAXA's mission launched to study the Sun's atmosphere, particularly the transition region and corona.
- **STEREO:** A project of NASA, launched to better understand the Sun's three-dimensional structure and dynamics.
- **SOHO:** A joint project of ESA, and NASA to study the sun and its influence out to the very edges of the solar system.

The Aditya L1 mission is a major milestone for the ISRO. It is a major step forward for India's space program and will help to make India a leading player in the field of solar research. The mission is also expected to make significant contributions to our understanding of the Sun and its impact on Earth.

Q. In context of ISRO's recent success, discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology.

(150 Words /10 Marks)

## Kavach- Train Collision Avoidance System

**Syllabus: GS Paper III- Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology**

### Why in the News?

The recent Kanchanjunga Express Train Accident has brought renewed attention to the railways' automatic train protection system, "Kavach."

### What is Kavach?

- It is an **indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) System**.
- It was **introduced** as part of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative** in the **2022 Union Budget**.
- The system is designed to **prevent accidents** caused by **Signal Passed at Danger (SPAD)**, a leading cause of train collisions.
- Kavach is developed by **Research Designs and Standards Organization (RDSO)** in association with Indian industry.

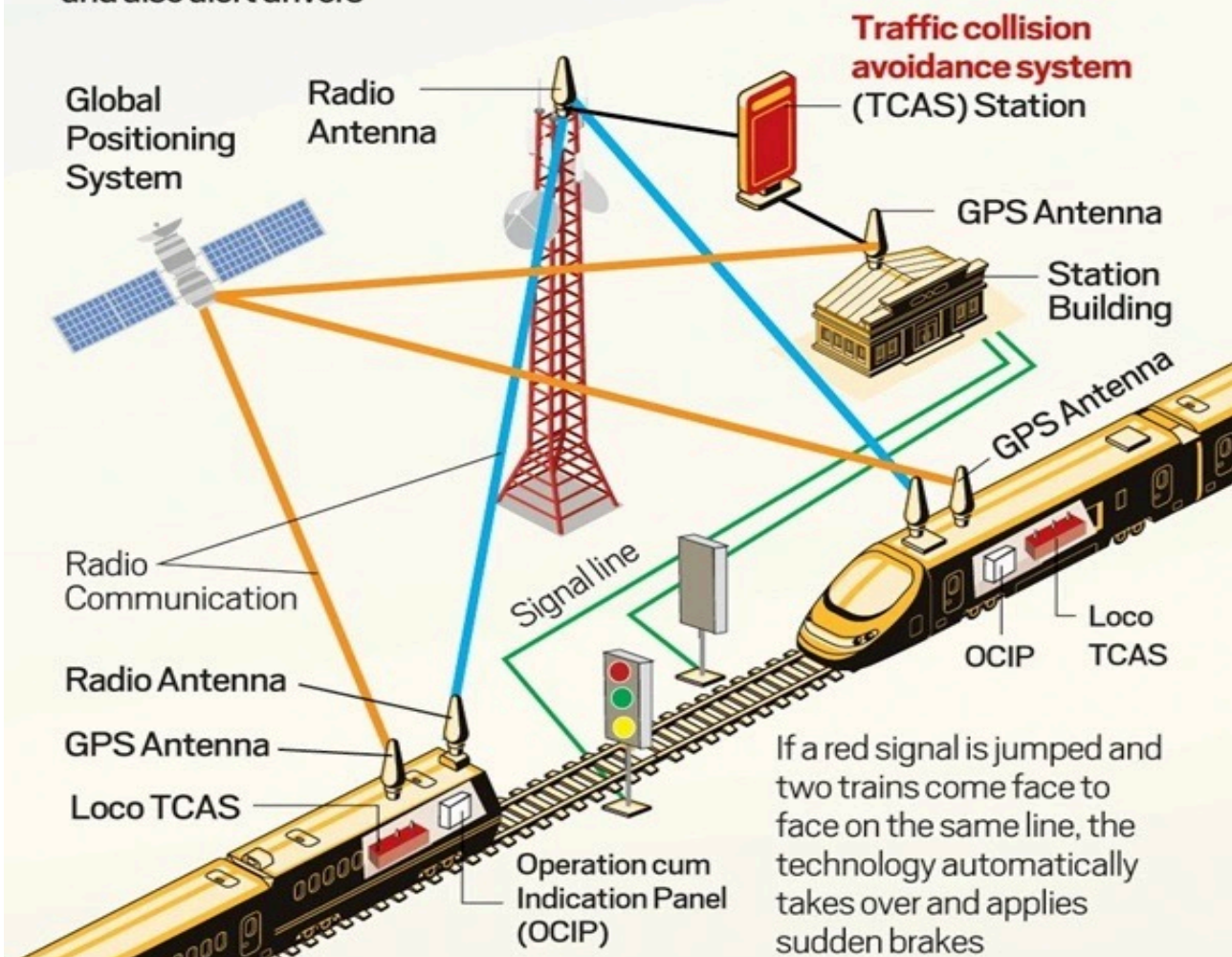


## Features of Kavach

- **Collection of electronic gadgets:** A series of electronic gadgets and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) systems are installed in locomotives, signalling systems and tracks.
- **Monitoring:** It provides for centralized live monitoring of train movements.
- **Automated system:** Kavach automatically applies brakes if a driver fails to do so.
- **Enhance Efficiency:** It helps in running trains during low visibility, automatically whistles.
- **Speed Control:** The system enforces speed restrictions by preventing trains from exceeding the designated limit for a particular section.
- **Other Features:** It displays speed, location, signals ahead to the locomotives, manual SOS messages (Distress messages) in emergency situations.

## HOW RAILWAYS' KAVACH PROTECTION SYSTEM WORKS

KPS is a set of electronic and radio frequency devices installed in locomotives, in the signalling system as well the tracks, that talk to each other using ultra-high radio frequencies to control the brakes of trains and also alert drivers



## Current implementation status of Kavach

- During a recent session in the **Rajya Sabha**, the **railway minister** provided an **update** on the **Kavach implementation**.
  - He stated that **Kavach** has been **set up on 1,465 route km** and **139 locomotives**, including Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) rakes, mainly on the South-Central Railway network.

## Significance of Kavach

Kavach can improve the safety and efficiency of India's railway network in the following ways.

- **Reduced Collision Risk:** Kavach can significantly reduce the risk of head-on, rear-end, and side collisions.

- **Improved Speed Control:** The system can minimize accidents caused due to speeding, human error or misjudgement.
- **Cost-Effective:** Indigenously developed Kavach offers a more economical alternative to existing foreign ATP systems.
- **Improve operational efficiency:** Its various features will help in improving the overall operational efficiency allowing for quicker response in case of emergencies.
- **Adaptability:** Kavach is designed to integrate with future advancements like electronic interlocking and newer radio communication technologies, ensuring its long-term relevance.

## About Indian Railways

- Indian Railways is the **fourth largest Railway network** in the world after the US, Russia and China, with a **total length of 92,952 kilometers**.
- It runs about 20,000 trains carrying more than 2.5 crores passengers and 2.8 million tonnes of freight every day.
- It was **built** during the **British colonial era**, with the **first railway** being built between **Mumbai and Thane** in 1852.

## Causes of rail accidents in India:

- **Failure of railway staff:** Most of the train accidents in India happen due to human error.
  - The data showed 55 % of the train accidents between the period between 2017-18 and 2021-22 were caused by railway staff error.
  - The highest percentage of accidents due to working staff error, 65 %, occurred in 2019-2020.
- **Derailments-** Derailments have been the biggest cause of rail accidents in India.
  - As per the data of the Commission of Railway Safety 75% of the accidents between 2017-18 and 2022-2023 came due to derailment.
- **Unmanned level crossings (UMLCs):** Level crossing accidents are the second biggest reason for accidents.
- **Outdated equipment:** Track defects, maintenance issues, outdated signalling equipment, are also a major causes of railway accidents.
- **Fire Hazard:** Data from the CRS and Indian Railways have cited fire to be the reason behind 28 railway accidents.
- **Insufficient Funds:** Lack of money/non-utilisation of available funds for track restorations led to 26 percent of the accidents.
- **Collisions-** Collisions due to foggy weather, low signal visibility, poor signalling etc are the third fourth biggest reason for accidents

By implementing Kavach, Indian Railways aims to achieve a safer and more reliable travel experience for passengers. The system will also promote better adherence to schedules and improved operational efficiency. While Kavach is not a complete solution, it represents a significant step towards a more robust and secure railway network in India.

Q. Critically examine the potential of Kavach, the indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, to improve safety in the Indian Railways. (150 words/10 marks)

## Awards

### 1. Bishnu Prasad Rabha Award\*\*

- **Dharmeshwar Nath** and **Durlabh Bhattacharjee** were conferred with the prestigious Bishnu Rabha Award 2024 for their outstanding contributions to art and culture
- It is awarded by the **Government of Assam** to **individuals/institutions** who have made significant **contributions** to **arts, literature, and social work**.
- It basically serves to recognize and honour those who have significantly enriched Assamese culture and society through their work and achievements.
- The award was **instituted in 1993** in **memory of Bishnu Prasad Rabha**, a renowned Assamese folk singer, dancer, and playwright.
- The award consists of a **cash prize, a citation, a xorai and seleng sador**.

### 2. Sahitya Akademi awards 2024\*\*

- Five personalities from Assam have received the coveted Sahitya Akademi awards 2024.
- The five winners are **Ranju Hazarika, Virgin Jekova Machahary, Nayanjyoti Sarma, Self-Made Rani Baro** and **Sutapa Chakraborty**.
- **Two awardees** from Assam have been awarded the **Bal Sahitya Puraskar 2024**.
- In the **Youth Awards category**, there are **three winners** from Assam.

#### Bal Sahitya Puraskar 2024:

| Name of the Awardee     | Awarded For                                |
|-------------------------|--|
| Ranju Hazarika          | Biponna Bismoi Khel (Assamese Novel)       |
| Virgin Jekova Machahary | Buhuma Boynibw (Poetry collection in Bodo) |

#### Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2024:

| Name of the Awardee | Awarded For   |
|---------------------|---|
| Nayanjyoti Sarma    | Jaal Kota Jui (Assamese short story collection)         |
| Self-Made Rani Baro | Saikhlum (Bodo short story collection)                  |
| Sutapa Chakraborty  | Deraje Halud Ful, Gatajanma (Bengali poetry collection) |

## Defence

### 3. Mirage-2000 fighter jets

- India and Qatar have recently discussed a proposal to buy 12 used French Mirage-2000 fighter jets.
- It is a **multirole, single engine delta-wing supersonic combat aircraft**, manufactured by Dassault Aviation, French.
  - Its **maximum speed** is **Mach 2.2**.
- Mirage 2000 can **carry laser guided bombs, air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles** and has a **Thomson-CSF RDY** (Radar Doppler Multi-target) radar on board.
- It was **first commissioned** in the **Indian Air Force in 1985** which gave it the name 'Vajra'.
- It played a decisive role in the **1999 Kargil war** and **Operation Bandar** of 2019.
  - *The air strike by the Indian Air Force (IAF) on a terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, was code-named 'Operation Bandar'.*



## Exercises

### 4. JIMEX

- The **8th edition** of the bilateral Japan-India maritime exercise (Jimex 24) recently **commenced** at **Yokosuka** in Japan.
  - The exercise was **first conceived** in **2012**.
- The Indian Navy's **indigenously built Stealth Frigate INS Shivalik** is participating in the JIMEX -24 exercise.
  - Japan is represented by its **Guided Missile Destroyer JS Yugiri**.
- The **exercise will include** both the **harbor** and the **sea phases**.
- JIMEX 24 provides an **opportunity** to learn from **each other's best practices** and **facilitates operational interactions** between India and Japan.
- The exercise also **reaffirms** their **shared commitment** towards **maritime security** in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

## Important Days

### 5. World Day Against Child Labour

- World Day Against Child Labour 2024 is annually observed on **12 June**.
- On this day in **2002** the International Labor Organization (ILO) celebrated the **first World Day Against Child Labor**, at its headquarters in Geneva.
- This year also marks the **25th anniversary** of the adoption of the **Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour**.
- "**Let's Act on Our Commitments: End Child Labour**" is the theme of World Day Against Child Labour 2024.
- The **purpose** of World Day Against Child Labor is to promote and broaden the global call to **end child labour**.

### 6. International Yoga Day (IDY)

- The **10th International Yoga Day** was recently celebrated on **June 21st**.

- The **theme** of **IYD 2024** is "**Yoga for Self and Society**."
- Idea of IDY was **first proposed by India** during the opening of the **69th session** of the **UN General Assembly**, held in 2014.
- The **UN proclaimed 21st June** as IDY by **passing a resolution in December 2014**.
- The **first Yoga Day** in India was **celebrated in 2015** at Rajpath in New Delhi.
- **June 21** (summer solstice), is the **longest day** of the year.
  - Therefore, it was decided that the IDY would be celebrated on this day.

## Schemes

### 7. Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina Scheme\*\*

- The Assam government recently announced the launch of the "Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina" (MMNM) scheme.
- The scheme **aims to empower girls and prevent child marriages** by providing financial support and educational opportunities.
- It has a **budget allocation of Rs 240 crore**.
- Under the scheme, **girl students** enrolled in **Class 11**, the **1st year of a degree course**, and the **1st year of post-graduation** in **government-run schools, colleges, and universities** will be **provided with a monthly stipend**.
- The **financial support** will be **provided irrespective** of the **economic status** of the **girls**.
- **Exclusions:** Daughters of MLAs and girls studying in private institutions.
  - Beneficiaries who drop out or get married while studying up to the degree level will cease to get the stipends.



## Miscellaneous

### 8. School in a Box kits\*\*

- The **Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA)** has **collaborated** with **UNICEF** to provide "School in a Box" kits for children **aged 6-18** in flood-affected relief camps.
- **School in a Box** kits are **portable classrooms** that can **provide basic education** to children in emergency situations.
- The kit **includes notebooks, drawing books, pencils, and other learning materials.**
- The initiative will help children in flood-affected areas to continue their education.

### 9. Striped Caecilian

- Recently, a **limbless amphibian** called the **Striped Caecilian** has been **discovered** for the first time in the **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.**
- **Caecilians** belong to the **family of Ichthyophiidae** and they **spend** most of their **lives burrowed under soil.**
- They are **indicator species** for the environment and play a crucial role in controlling pests.
- As they are **ancient species**, their presence shows a critical linkage to evolution and intercontinental speciation.

### 10. Assam's Green Initiatives\*\*

- The **Assam Secretariat** recently became the **country's first green state government** headquarters with the inauguration of a 2.5 MW solar power project on its campus.
  - This project would yield an average of 3 lakh units of electricity monthly.
  - Thus, **Assam Secretariat Complex** will rely entirely on **solar-generated electricity** for daily consumption.
- Other State Government's initiatives aimed at the promotion of green energy:
  - **25-MW** solar power project at **Namrup**
  - Solar projects at **Bharchalla in the Sonitpur district, Khudigaon in**

**Dhubri district.**

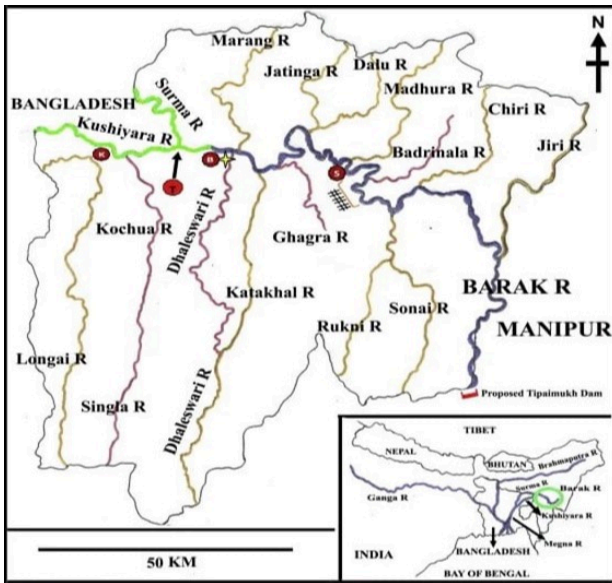
- **1,000-MW** solar project in **Karbi Anglong**
- Additionally, from **1st of July**, the **free electricity supply** to the official quarters of the Chief Minister, other ministers, and government officials would be done away with.
  - They would be asked to pay for the consumption of electricity.

### 11. Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

- Recently a training Workshop on e-SAKSHI Portal for revised fund flow procedure under MPLAD Scheme was organized.
  - **eSAKSHI portal** is an **end-to-end solution** for **efficient & transparent implementation** of the **MPLADS.**
- MPLADS is a **Central Sector Scheme** that comes under the **Ministry of Statistics Programme Implementation.**
- As per the scheme amount of **Rs. 5 crore** is allotted to MPs for creating durable community assets based on the requirements of the local community.
  - These funds are **non-lapsable** and can be **carried forward to next year.**
- At least **15% of MPLADS funds** is **allocated** for areas inhabited by **SC population** and **7.5%** for **areas inhabited** by the **ST population.**

### 12. Kushiya river

- The River Kushiya in Karimganj Assam is flowing above the danger level.
- The **Kushiya River** is a **tributary river** of Barak.
- It forms on the **India-Bangladesh border** as a branch of the Barak River, when the **Barak River separates** into **Kushiya** and **Surma.**
- The **waters** of the **Kushiya originate** in the **state of Nagaland** and pick up tributaries from Manipur, Mizoram and Assam.
- After forming several braided streams, it is **rejoined** by the **Surma** in **Bangladesh** and **becomes** the **Meghna River.**



## District At a Glance

### South Salmara Mankachar

#### Geography of South Salmara Mankachar

- South Salmara Mankachar is **one** of the **western most district of Assam**.
- It comes under **Lower Assam division**.
- **District headquarter:** Hatsingimari town.
- **Geographic Area:** 568 square km
- **Density of Population:** 980/km
- **District Boundaries:**
  - **North:** Dhubri
  - **Northeast:** Goalpara
  - **West:** Bangladesh

- **Southeast:** Meghalaya

- The mighty river **Brahmaputra** with its tributaries **flows through this district** from east to west.
- Other rivers flowing through the district are **Jinjiram, Kalonadi** (also known as Ganol) etc.
- The **majority** of the **population** of the district **live on chars** in the river.

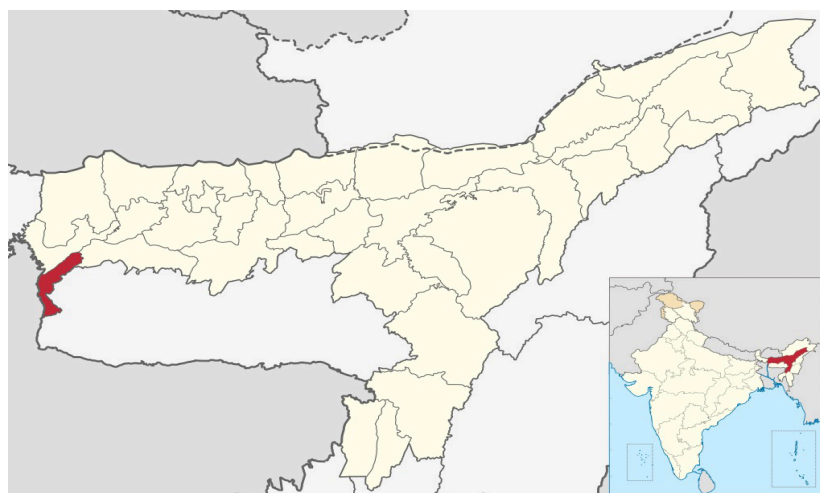
#### History of South Salmara Mankachar

- The administrative district of South Salmara Mankachar was **created by bifurcating the Old Dhubri district** in 2016.
- On **15 August 2015**, Assam's then **Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi announced 5 new administrative districts** and South Salmara Mankachar was one among those.

#### Places of Interest

- **Tomb of Mir Jumla:** The tomb of Mir Jumla, Governor of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb is located in Thakuranbari village in the Assam-Meghalaya border near Mankachar town of the district.
- **Kamakhya Temple at Mankachar:** It is the second largest temple of Devi Kamakhya located in Mankachar border of Assam. This temple was built by Great Koch King Narayana

Q. Locate the neighbouring districts and country surrounding **South Salmara Mankachar** in the given map.







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