Lachit Borphukan – the Ahom general of Saraighat and Lachit Divas

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Why in news: 24 November is observed in Assam as Lachit Divas, the birth anniversary of Lachit Borphukan (1622–1672), the Ahom general whose victory at Saraighat on the Brahmaputra in 1671 stopped a Mughal advance into Assam.

Key points

- Life: born on 24 November 1622; died on 25 April 1672, about a year after his great victory. He was a general of the royal army of the Ahom kingdom of Assam.
- The Ahoms: founded in the 13th century by Sukaphaa, the Ahom kingdom ruled the Brahmaputra valley for about six centuries and resisted repeated Mughal invasions.
- Battle of Saraighat (1671): fought on the Brahmaputra near Guwahati against the Mughal army of Aurangzeb led by Raja Ram Singh I of Amber; Lachit's river warfare and use of terrain inflicted a heavy defeat on the Mughals.
- Remembrance: the Lachit Barphukan Gold Medal has been awarded to the best cadet of the National Defence Academy since 1999; his 400th birth anniversary was celebrated in 2022, with the closing ceremony in New Delhi on 25 November 2022.
- Statue of Valour: a 125-foot statue (an 84-foot figure on a 41-foot pedestal) was unveiled at Hollongapar near Jorhat on 9 March 2024.

In the exam: TNPSC – medieval India: the Ahoms and their resistance to the Mughals; days of importance (Lachit Divas, 24 November). UPSC Prelims – regional kingdoms of the North-East, the Battle of Saraighat (1671) and naval/riverine warfare.

Questions

1. The Battle of Saraighat (1671), in which the Ahom general Lachit Borphukan defeated the Mughals, was fought on which river?

A. Ganga
B. Brahmaputra
C. Barak
D. Teesta

2. The Lachit Barphukan Gold Medal, instituted in 1999, is awarded to:

A. The best cadet of the National Defence Academy

B. The best NCC cadet of the North-East

C. The best performing Assam Rifles battalion

D. The winner of the national river-rafting championship

Answers with explanations

1. **B) Brahmaputra** – Saraighat lies on the Brahmaputra near Guwahati; the Ahom forces under Lachit Borphukan defeated the Mughal army led by Raja Ram Singh I of Amber in a largely river-borne battle.

2. **A) The best cadet of the National Defence Academy** – Since 1999 the medal named after the Ahom general has gone to the best passing-out cadet of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla – a tribute to his leadership.

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