Blind blood-red eel discovered in Assam

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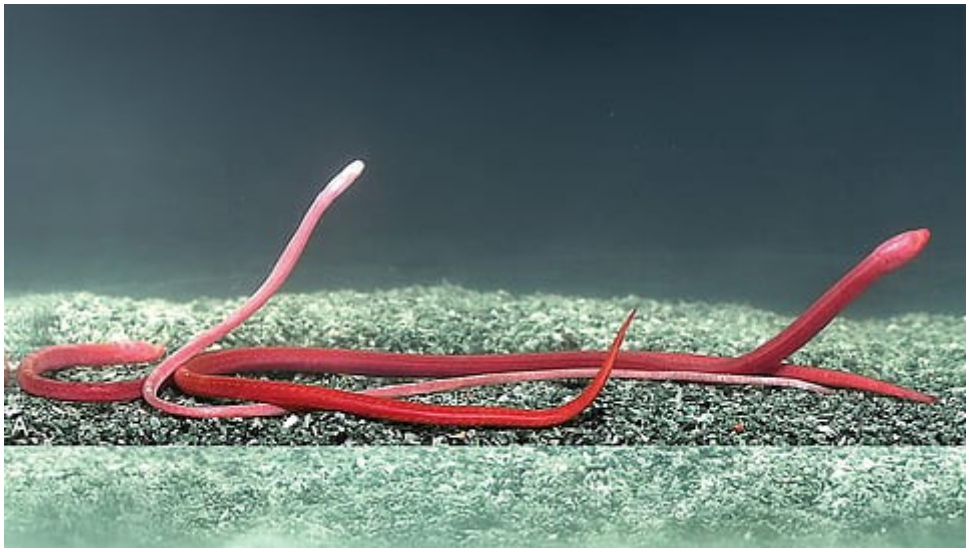
Why in News?

Scientists have discovered a new species of blind, blood-red eel, named Rakthamichthys anchi, in underground aquifers connected to dug-out wells in the Goalpara district of Assam.

Genus Rakthamichthys
• The genus consists of subterranean swamp eels that are endemic to India. • Members of the genus exhibit adaptations such as elongated bodies, reduced eyesight and red pigmentation. • The term *Rakthamichthys* is derived from the Malayalam word *raktham*, meaning "blood", and the Greek word *ichthys*, meaning "fish".

Rakthamichthys Anchi

- The eel was found in two wells, each about 7 metres deep, in Goalpara district.
- Only 4 specimens have been recorded so far, indicating that the species may be extremely rare.
- The species name anchi comes from the Garo language word meaning "blood".
- The species *lacks visible eyes and body pigmentation*; adaptations associated with life in complete darkness.



- Its characteristic blood-red colour results from blood vessels being visible through its translucent skin.
- Researchers used micro-computed tomography (micro-CT) scanning and DNA analysis to confirm that it represents a distinct species.
- **Significance -** This is the 2nd remarkable subterranean fish discovery from the same region within a short period, following the discovery of *Gitchak nakana*.
- The finding suggests that the underground aquifers of northeastern India may harbour a rich and largely unexplored ecosystem.

Reference

Down to Earth | Rakthamichthys Anchi'

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