

## Prelim Bits 11-07-2019

### Locust outbreak

- **Locust** outbreak reported in **Rajasthan** and **Gujarat** from areas bordering Pakistan.
- Locusts are related to **grasshoppers**.
- The common name which it generally refers is '**short-horned grasshoppers**'.
- The **desert locust** is potentially the most dangerous because of the ability of **swarms** to fly rapidly across great distances.
- When environmental conditions produce many green plants, locusts can congregate into thick, mobile, ravenous swarms.
- Locust swarms can devastate crops and cause major agricultural damage.
- Desert locust plagues threatens the economic livelihood of one-tenth of the world's humans.
- A desert locust swarm can pack between 40 and 80 million locusts into less than half a square mile.
- Each locust can consume the equivalent of their body weight (2 g) in plants each day, so a swarm of such size would eat 423 million pounds of plants every day.
- An outbreak of desert locusts in the villages of Rajasthan and Gujarat has posed a threat to the crops.
- India has a "Locust Control and Research scheme" that is being implemented through the 'Locust Warning Organisation'(LWO).
- It was established in 1939 and amalgamated in 1946 with the Directorate of Plant Protection Quarantine and Storage (PPQS) of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The LWO's responsibility is monitoring and control of the locust situation in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat and partly in Punjab and Haryana.
- It publishes a fortnightly bulletin on the locust situation.
- It has set up a helpline for farmers in the State.

### ASRAAM

- Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (**ASRAAM**) is the next generation **infrared-guided** missile of UK.

- It is also known as 'heat seeking', because infrared is radiated primarily by heat.
- It is designed and built by MBDA, UK to provide enhanced aerial combat capabilities for fighter aircraft.
- It is widely used as a '**Within Visual Range**'(WVR) air dominance missile with a range of over 25km.
- It can also be fired at targets behind its aircraft.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is looking to adopt ASRAAM across its fighter fleet.
- This plan is to bridge the missile gap between the IAF and the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), which displayed an edge during the 27 February dogfight.
- The missile was shortlisted through a tender and MBDA was working with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on the integration.

## **Kharchi Pooja**

- It is an important festival celebrated in **Tripura**.
- The word **Kharchi** is derived from the word '**Khya**' which means '**Earth**'. It is basically done to worship mother Earth.
- It is performed after '**Ama pechi**' or '**Ambu bachi**' period.
- According to Tripuri, 'Ama Pechi' is menstruation of mother goddess or mother Earth.
- Among Tripuri the menstruation of a woman is considered as unholy.
- During this period all the auspicious functions performed by women are prohibited.
- After the menstruation period 'Ama pechi', mother Earth is considered to become unholy.
- So even the soil is not ploughed nor digging of any where on this day, to give it time to cleanse.
- The Puja is performed to wash out the sins and to clean the post menstrual phase of mother earth's menstruation.
- The festival lasts for 7 days and 14 gods of the dynasty deity of Tripuri people are worshipped.
- The 14 gods are worshipped by the royal priest called **Chantai**.
- Only members of chantai family descendants are allowed to take the post of 'Chantai'.
- All of rituals are of tribal origin but both tribal and non-tribal people join together to celebrate the festival.

## **Apprenticeship training reforms**

- The 'Central Apprenticeship Council' under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, proposed new reforms in apprenticeship training.

- Major proposals are,
  - i. To raise the upper limit of apprentices from the existing 10% of total strength of establishment to 15%
  - ii. To lower the limit of an establishment with mandatory obligation to engage apprentices from 40 to 30.
  - iii. To lower the limit of establishments eligible to engage apprentices on optional basis from 6 to 4.
  - iv. Rationalization of stipend payable to all categories of apprentices.
  - v. Fixed stipend for apprentices linked to their educational qualification to make it easier for an apprentice to understand the program.

### **Central Apprenticeship Council (CAC)**

- It is an **apex statutory body** under the Apprentices Act, 1961.
- Its function is to assist and advice the Central Government for the implementation of Apprentice Act.
- Central Government can establish the CAC by notification in the official Gazette under Section 24(1) of the Apprentices Act, 1961.
- It functions under,
  - i. **Chairman-** Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
  - ii. **Vice Chairman-** Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- Other members of council includes,
  - i. representatives of the Establishment in the PSUs,
  - ii. Private Sector, representative from Central Ministries and State /UT Governments,
  - iii. persons having special knowledge and experience on the matters relating to industries
  - iv. persons having special knowledge and experience on the matters relating to Labour, and
  - v. representatives of the AICTE and UGC.
- It aims to meet the aspirations of the Indian youth who strive to gain on-the-job training and secure better opportunities for employment.

**Source: Indian Express, PIB, The Hindu**



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