

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 23-06-2020

### Ambubachi Festival

- It is a four-day fair to mark the annual menstruation of the goddess at Kamakhya temple in Nilachal Hills in Guwahati, Assam.
- It is also considered as an occasion to promote awareness on menstrual hygiene.
- This ritualistic fair is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared with other parts of India.
- Recently, the festival was observed without mendicants, hermits and devotees for the first time in almost 500 years.
- The festival is celebrated since 1565.
- The attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam is celebrated with a ritual called '*Tuloni Biya*', *meaning small wedding*.
- A similar custom is followed at the *Devi temple at Chengannur* town in Alappuzha district of Kerala.
- The temple is shut for the days the Goddess there is believed to undergo her period.

### Kamakhya Temple

- It is located atop the Nilachal Hills, in outskirts of Guwahati, Assam.
- It is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers.
- Shakti peeth is originated based on the story of the death of goddess Sati.
- God Shiva who held her dead body, then started his dance of destruction, causing Sati's body to disintegrate and fall into pieces.
- The sites where these portions of Sati goddess fell, are the Shakti peeth.
- Kamakhya temple's sanctum sanctorum houses the yoni - female genital symbolised by a rock.
- **Four Major Shakthi Peeths in India** - Jagannath Temple, Puri; Kamakhya Temple near Guwahati; Dakshina Kalika in Kolkata; Tara Tarini near Brahmapur, Odisha.

### Minimum Support Price

- The MSP is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers.
- Reason behind the idea of MSP is to counter price volatility of agricultural

commodities due to the factors like variation in their supply, lack of market integration and information asymmetry.

- The MSP is fixed on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- Factors taken into consideration for fixing MSP include,
  1. Demand and supply,
  2. Cost of production (A2 + FL method) Price trends in the market, both domestic and international,
  3. Inter-crop price parity,
  4. Terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture,
  5. A minimum of 50% as the margin over cost of production,
  6. Likely implications of MSP on consumers of that product.
- The Commission also makes visits to states for on-the-spot assessment of the various constraints that farmers face in marketing their produce, or even raising the productivity levels of their crops.
- Based on all these inputs, the Commission then finalizes its recommendations, which are then submitted to the government.
- The government, in turn, circulates the CACP reports to state governments and concerned Central Ministries for their comments.
- After receiving the feed-back from them, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) of the Union government takes a final decision on the level of MSPs and other recommendations made by the CACP.
- The Food Corporation of India (FCI), the nodal central agency of the Government of India, along with other State Agencies undertakes procurement of crops.

### **Crops Covered under MSP**

- Government announces minimum support prices (MSPs) for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.
- The mandated crops are 14 crops of the kharif season, 6 Rabi crops and two other commercial crops.
- In addition, the MSPs of toria and de-husked coconut are fixed on the basis of the MSPs of rapeseed/mustard and copra, respectively.
- The list of crops are as follows.
  1. Cereals (7) - paddy, wheat, barley, jowar, bajra, maize and ragi
  2. Pulses (5) - gram, arhar/tur, moong, urad and lentil
  3. Oilseeds (8) - groundnut, rapeseed/mustard, toria, soya bean, sunflower seed, sesame, safflower seed and nigerseed.

4. Raw cotton.
5. Raw jute.
6. Copra
7. De-husked coconut
8. Sugarcane (Fair and remunerative price)
9. Virginia flu cured (VFC) tobacco

- Recently, Government has declared MSP for mature de husked coconut for the season 2020 at Rs. 2700/- per quintal, thus hiking the MSP by 5.02% from Rs. 2571/- per quintal during season 2019.

## UN Arms Trade Treaty

- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a multilateral treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional weapons.
- The treaty was negotiated in New York City at a global conference under the auspices of the UN in 2012.
- UN General Assembly adopted the ATT in 2013.
- It entered into force on 4th December 2014.
- 105 states have ratified the treaty, and a further 32 states have signed but not ratified it. [India is not a member to this treaty]
- It requires member countries to keep records of international transfers of weapons and to prohibit cross-border shipments that could be used in human rights violations or attacks on civilians.
- Recently China's efforts to join the treaty has been rejected by the United States.
- It comes after US President Donald Trump announced plans last year to pull the United States out of the agreement which entered into force in 2014.
- The US Senate never ratified the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, even after former president Barack Obama endorsed it.

## Central Vista Project

- Central Vista Committee is chaired by Central Public Works Department (CPWD) additional director general (works) under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Central Vista proposal of the CPWD is to construct a triangular Parliament building in the 10.5-acre plot adjacent to the existing heritage structure built in the 1920s.
- The project is estimated to cost ₹922 crore.
- It is a part of the larger revamp of the entire 3-km Central Vista from

Rashtrapati Bhavan till India Gate.

- It includes constructing a new triangular Parliament opposite the existing heritage structure and building a central secretariat for all Ministries.
- The existing Parliament building as well north and South Blocks are proposed to be re-purposed as museums.
- The government's plan was approved by the Central Vista Committee at a meeting on April 23 with the suggestion that the design be "in sync" with the existing Parliament House.

### **Delhi Urban Art Commission**

- It was formed by an Act of Parliament in 1973.
- It is meant to advise the Centre on matters of preservation, development and maintenance of the aesthetic quality of the capital Delhi's urban and environmental design.
- Recently Centre's proposal to construct a new Parliament building in time for Independence Day 2022 was not approved by the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC).

### **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)**

- It is India's chief anti-smuggling intelligence, investigations and operations agency.
- It is headed by a Director General of the rank of Special Secretary to the Government of India.
- It works to secure India's national and economic security by preventing the outright smuggling of contraband such as firearms, gold, narcotics, Fake Indian Currency notes, antiques, wildlife and environmental products.
- It is also a part of the following -
  1. Cabinet Secretariat's National Authority Chemical Weapons Convention,
  2. Ministry of Home Affairs/NIA's special wings on Left Wing Extremism Financing,
  3. Various inter-ministerial committees on Terror Financing, Coastal Security,
- Recently, DRI has busted a wildlife smuggling syndicate that smuggled different varieties of macaws.
- Those exotic and highly endangered birds had been smuggled via the Indo-Bangladesh border without any licit documents.
- The joint operation was carried out in coordination with the Wildlife Crime

Control Bureau (WCCB) and the Customs Department at the Kolkata airport.

## **WCCB**

- It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to combat organized wildlife crime.
- The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006 provisions came operational in the year 2008.
- UNEP has also awarded WCCB with Asia Environment Enforcement Award, 2018.
- WCCB is also partnering with United Nations University and CIESIN-Earth Institute at Columbia University through the Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System Initiative.

## **Macaws**

- Macaws are long-tailed, often colorful, New World parrots.
- They are popular in aviculture or as companion parrots, although there are conservation concerns about several species in the wild.
- They are native to Central America and North America (only Mexico), South America, and formerly the Caribbean.
- Most species are associated with forests, especially rainforests, but others prefer woodland or savannah-like habitats.
- A macaw's facial feather pattern is as unique as a fingerprint.
- The largest macaws are the hyacinth, Buffon's (great green) and green-winged macaws.
- Many of the Macaw species lies between Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered under IUCN.



**Source:** PIB, the Hindu, Economic Times



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