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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