

NEWS TODAY

GOVERNMENT STEPS UP MEASURES TO CONTROL DESERTS LOCUST SWARMS

- Government has increased efforts to control spread of swarms of desert locusts in **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh**.
 - Locusts belong to family of grasshoppers called Acrididae and are omnivorous migratory pests.
 - Found in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, they inhabit some 60 countries.
 - Out of the 4 species of locusts found in India, desert locust is the most destructive pest.
- Current swarms are of **pink immature adult locusts**, which fly high and cover long distances during day hours along with westerly winds coming from Pakistan.
- **Locust Warning Organisation** under **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** is responsible for monitoring, survey and control of desert locust in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Measures taken

- **200 Locust Circle Offices set up** to conduct survey & control operations in coordination with District Administration and agriculture field machinery of affected States.
- **Fire brigades for pesticide spray, survey vehicles, control vehicles with spray equipments etc. have been deployed** in affected states.
- **Adequate stock of pesticide (Malathion)** is being provided.
- **Regular coordination with South-West Asian countries** like Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan where locust attacks are common.

TWO MORE STATES OPT OUT OF PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY)

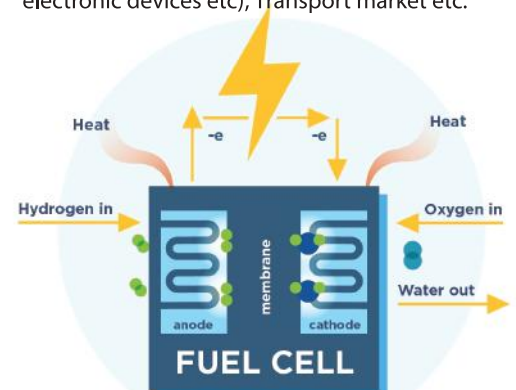
- **Telangana and Jharkhand opted out of PMFBY** in addition to West Bengal, Bihar, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, citing recent changes.
- **Recent changes in PMFBY**
 - **Central Subsidy was capped** to premium rates upto 30% for unirrigated areas and 25% for irrigated areas, **thereby increasing state's share**.
 - **Enrolment was made voluntary** for all farmers, which was mandatory earlier.
 - ➔ As **number of farmers will go down**, premium rates will increase and governments will have to fill the gap.
- PMFBY is a centrally sponsored scheme which **provides comprehensive crop insurance from pre-sowing to post-harvest period** against non-preventable natural risks.
 - Premium of 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops, 1.5% for all Rabi crops and 5% for annual commercial and horticultural crops.
 - **All farmers including sharecroppers and tenant farmers** growing notified crops in a notified area are eligible.
 - **Risks covered include:** risks to planting, Standing Crop; Post-Harvest Losses; Localized Calamities etc.

FARMERS OPPOSE CENTER'S PLAN TO BAN 27 COMMONLY-USED INSECTICIDES

- **Ministry of Agriculture** published a **draft Banning of Insecticides Order 2020**, that prohibits import, manufacture, sale, transport, distribution and use of 27 insecticides.
 - Earlier, Government constituted committee had recommended that 66 insecticides/pesticides banned or withdrawn in other countries continue to be used in India.
 - Out of these 66 pesticides, 18 pesticides were already banned in 2018.
- These have been found to **contaminate water bodies and underground water**, causing health hazards to humans, animals and honey bees which are known to help in pollination of plants.
- **However some concerns have been raised**
 - List includes mixture of **chemicals used to control pests, fungal infections and weeds** that farmers have been using for a long time.
 - ➔ Thus, banning these chemicals **affects food security**, increasing cost of cultivation, livelihood of farmers.
 - **Affects exports:** Indian pesticide exports are pegged at ₹21,000 crore, while list of chemicals account for about a fifth of the total industry.
- India has ratified **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants** that aims to eliminate/restrict production and use of all intentionally produced POPs found in industrial chemicals and pesticides.

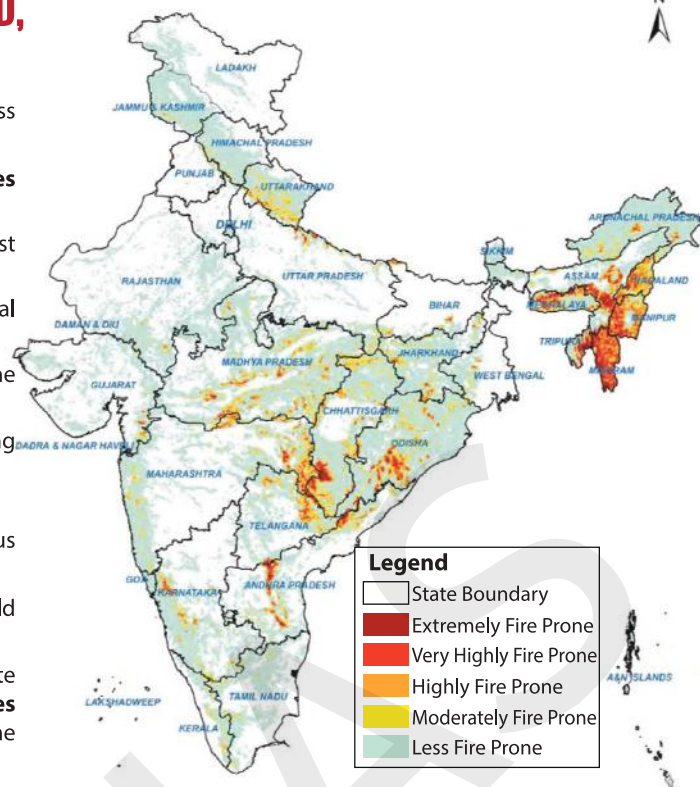
INDIAN OIL BETS ON HYDROGEN VEHICLE FOR SELF-RELIANT FUTURE MOBILITY

- Indian Oil is embarking on a Rs 300-crore demonstration project for **hydrogen fuel cell (HFC)** vehicles.
 - Since its **raw materials can be sourced locally**, it is seen as alternative to **lithium-ion battery-powered vehicles**, which is dependent on imports.
 - Earlier, NTPC also launched HFC bus and car project for Leh and New Delhi.
- HFC is a **fuel cell that combines hydrogen and oxygen** to produce electricity with water and steam as the only byproducts.
 - Fuel cells are electrochemical devices to convert chemical energy into electrical energy.
- They **do not need periodical recharging** like batteries and produce electricity as long as long as supplied with a hydrogen and oxygen (usually air) source.
- **Benefits:** eliminates pollution, reduce dependence on oil and gas imports, higher electrical efficiency, noise-free operation, simple maintenance etc.
- **Limitations of HFC:** high cost of catalysts (platinum), high cost of equipment, issues with storage of hydrogen gas, maintenance issues (like corrosion) etc.
- **Applications:** Stationary sector (to power buildings, isolated houses etc), Portable sector (military applications like portable soldier power, electronic devices etc), Transport market etc.



NO MAJOR FOREST FIRE BREAKOUT IN UTTARAKHAND, CLARIFIES FOREST DEPARTMENT

- There has been no major forest fire due to sporadic rains and partly due to less anthropogenic activity.
 - > Uttarakhand had lost **more than 1,200 hectares in the massive forest fires in May last year.**
- According to **India State of Forest Report 2019**, over **30,000 incidents** of forest fires were **reported in 2019.**
 - > About **half of India's forests** are prone to fires. 43% were prone to occasional fires and 5% to frequent fires, and 1% were at high or very high risk.
 - > Most fire prone areas are found in north eastern and central part of the country.
- **Impact:** loss of flora & fauna, livelihoods; air pollution; water pollution, increasing spread of weeds, soil erosion, loss of regeneration, landslides, etc.
- **Causes of forest fires:**
 - > **Natural:** lightning, high atmospheric temperatures and dryness, spontaneous combustion of dry fuel such as sawdust and leaves.
 - > **Anthropogenic:** shifting cultivation, use of fires by villagers to ward off wild animals, recreation etc.
- **Steps taken:** Monitoring through satellites like NASA's **MODIS** (or Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer), **National Action Plan on Forest Fires 2018**, Centrally Sponsored Forest Fire Prevention and Management (FPM) Scheme etc



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) introduces real-time trading of electricity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under this, auctions will be held 48 times a day, once every half an hour. • Benefits: allows electricity producers to sell surplus energy, consumers to buy in case of shortage, better utilization of renewable energy (which is prone to fluctuations), enhance overall grid security etc. • IEX is first and largest energy exchange in India providing a nationwide, automated trading platform for physical delivery of electricity, Renewable Energy Certificates and Energy Saving Certificates.
<p>Global Economic Outlook (GEO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is released by Fitch ratings. (Note- World Economic Outlook is released by International Monetary Fund) • It forecasted 5% decline in India's GDP in 2020-21 in contrast to earlier forecast of growth of 0.8%. • This is because, India had a very stringent lockdown policy that has lasted a lot longer than initially expected and incoming economic activity data have been spectacularly weak.
<p>Zojila tunnel project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government is planning to make changes to project structure to avoid cost escalation. • Zojila tunnel aims to provide all-year connectivity between Leh and Srinagar. • It is important because Zojila Pass, located on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway at an altitude of 3,529 metres, is closed in winters due to snowfall. • It is slated to be longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia.
<p>Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It also known as Jeypore Rainforest and is a part of Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Recently, National Board for Wild Life has recommended coal mining in a part of elephant reserve. • It is located in Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam. • Dehing is a river that flows through this forest and Patkai is hill at the foot of which sanctuary lies.
<p>World Dugong Day 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed on May 28th, with theme "Save dugong, save livelihood". • Dugong (commonly known as sea cow) is world's only vegetarian marine mammal. • Found in: warm coastal waters from East Africa to Australia, including Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and Pacific. • Threats: destruction and modification of habitat, pollution, rampant illegal fishing activities, vessel strikes, unsustainable hunting or poaching and unplanned tourism. • IUCN status: Vulnerable
<p>Charru mussel (Mytella strigata)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an invasive mussel, native to South and Central American coasts, that is spreading in backwaters of Kerala. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Mussels are often used as indicators of water quality • It is threatening livelihoods of fishermen engaged in molluscan fisheries. • Rapid spread of Charru mussel may have been triggered by Cyclone Ockhi (2017).

☎
🌐

DELHI

LUCKNOW

JAIPUR

HYDERABAD

PUNE

AHMEDABAD

CHANDIGARH