



2022



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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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MAY 2022



Sirumalai Biodiversity Park



Sirumalai Biodiversity Park – Today Current Affairs

- Government of Tamil Nadu is developing a Biodiversity Park in Sirumalai Hill Range in Dindigul District.
- Its main objective is to create awareness for sustainable management of ecologically sensitive areas.

Today Current Affairs

Main point:

- The park is a nature preserve that shelters the region's natural heritage and has educational and cultural value, as well as enhances the quality of the environment.
- Various biodiversity components such as mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians etc. are found here.
- Various types of flowering plants have been planted around the park and necessary irrigation facilities have been provided.
- Combination of pollinating plants is also planned to attract butterflies and host plants.

Biodiversity Park : The Hindu Analysis

- Biodiversity Park is a unique wilderness landscape where the ecology of native plant and animal species is reconciled as biotic communities in an area.
- The underlying principle of the park is to recreate a self-sustaining ecosystem with native flora and fauna that characterize the area.

Purpose : The Hindu Analysis

- To create awareness among forest stakeholders, public and student community about biodiversity and its importance.
- To create diversity of plants which are endangered, endangered as well as highly valuable for human existence.
- To build a gene bank with important plant species including rare and endemic species.
- To create a carbon sink for future generations with indigenous species to reduce the problems of global warming and climate change. The Hindu Analysis
- To promote a culture of conservation and appreciation of natural resources and its management.
- To create livelihood opportunities for the local communities, especially the tribal communities who have been a part of the forest ecosystem since time immemorial.

Major Points Related to Sirumalai Hill Range : The Hindu Analysis

- Sirumalai Hills is spread over 60,000 acres in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu.
- He is considered to be the originator of the Eastern Ghats. They are situated at an altitude of 400 to 1,650 meters above sea level, at a distance of about 25 km from Dindigul city.
- The hills act as a storehouse of many rare and endemic plants.

Vegetation : The Hindu Analysis

- The lower mountain range consists of highly disturbed scrub forest, while the middle

mountain range is dominated by tropical mixed dry deciduous forests.

- Semi-evergreen forests are located at higher altitudes. Woodland savannas are found along the slopes at higher elevations.

Animal kingdom : The Hindu Analysis

- Gaur, leopard, spotted deer, mouse deer, barking deer, jackal, sloth bear, wild boar, Indian pangolin, slender loris and many species of reptiles and avifauna are found in this area.

Swadeep Kumar

QS World University Ranking 2023



- QS World University Ranking 2023 – Today Current Affairs
- Recently QS World University Ranking 2023 has been released.

Today Current Affairs

QS World University Rankings:

- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) is a leading global career and educational network for aspiring professionals, aimed at advancing personal and professional development.
- QS develops and successfully implements comparative data collection and analysis methods to identify the quality of institutions.
- The 'QS World University Rankings' is an annual publication of university rankings that includes global overall and subject rankings.

Six criteria for evaluation and their weighting : The Hindu Analysis

- Academic reputation (40%)
- Employer reputation (10%)
- Faculty/Student Ratio (20%)
- Excellence per Faculty (20%)
- International Faculty Ratio (5%)
- International Student Ratio (5%)

Global Ranking:

Top Rank : The Hindu Analysis

- America's Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is the top university for the 11th year in a row.
- The University of Cambridge was ranked second, followed by Stanford University.

Indian Institutes : The Hindu Analysis

- Indian Institute of Science (IISc) was ranked highest, followed by IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi respectively. Globally, the total number of Indian institutions in the top 1,000 has increased from 22 to 27.
- IISc Bangalore is the world's top research university, with a score of 100/100 for this metric.
- Also IISc Bangalore is the fastest growing South Asian University in the QS World University Ranking Top-200. Overall, Indian educational institutions (41 of which made it to the rankings) have performed poorly in several key parameters. The Hindu Analysis
- For example, 30 out of 41 universities have suffered a decline in the Faculty Student Ratio (FSR) indicator with only four recording improvements.
- The report shows that India's presence in the top 500 category proves that India's IITs are run like other IITs across the world.
- Apart from IISc, eight IITs (Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee, Guwahati, Indore) have been ranked in the top 500 globally. The Hindu Analysis
- No other Indian university, public or private, has found a place in the top 500 category globally since the inception of the Institute of Eminence scheme.

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Vermin animal



Vermin animal – Today Current Affairs

- The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 was introduced in the Parliament in December 2021 to amend the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The basic objective of the amendment is to align the Act with the change in circumstances and try to emulate the appropriate solution to the killing of vermin/pest animals.

Today Current Affairs

Vermin:

- Vermin are basically problematic or harmful animals because they pose a threat to humans, crops, livestock or property.
- Species that are placed in Schedule V of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 are classified as vermin.
- Examples: crows, fruit bats, rats that can be freely hunted.
- The Act does not define the word vermin. Section 62 of the Wildlife Protection Act empowers the central government to declare any wild animal as vermin.
- Species of wild animals included in Schedule I and Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 cannot be declared as vermin.
- An animal can be declared as a vermin in any specified area and for a specified period.
- To prevent human-wildlife conflicts, several states have petitioned in the past to declare various animals, including elephants, Indian porcupines, bonnet macaques, langurs and barking deer, as vermin.

- Center has declared rhesus monkey in Himachal Pradesh, wild boar in Uttarakhand and Nilgai in Bihar as vermin.

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 : The Hindu Analysis

- The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides a legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals and plants, the management of their habitats, as well as the regulation and control of trade in wild animals, plants and their products.
- The Act also lists the schedules of plants and animals that are protected and monitored by the government.
- The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 currently has six schedules which provide separate protection to animals and plants. The Hindu Analysis
- Animals of the breeds and classes listed in Schedule I and Part II of Schedule II enjoy the highest protection. For example Himalayan brown bear, Indian elephant, golden geckos, Andaman teal, hornbills, black coral, Amara brucei and many more. The highest punishment has been prescribed for offenses under these.
- Animals of breeds and classes listed in Schedule III and Schedule IV are also protected, for example barking deer, falcon, kingfisher, tortoise, etc., but the penalties are comparatively less.
- Schedule V includes animals that can be hunted. For example, crows, rats and rodents, fruit bats etc.
- Prohibited from cultivation and planting of plants, trees and crops mentioned in Schedule VI. For example, Kooth, Red Wanda, Pitcher Plant etc.

Possible changes through the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021: The Hindu Analysis

- The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 As a significant amendment, the number of schedules has been reduced from six to four.
- Schedule I will include species that require the highest level of protection.
- Schedule II will include species that need less protection.
- Whereas plants will be included in Schedule III. The Hindu Analysis
- It provides for the complete abolition of Schedule V. This excludes vermin species from any sort of schedule. The term vermin refers to small animals that spread diseases and contaminate/harm foods.
- It incorporates a new program for species listed in the appendices under CITES (Scheduled Species).
- The Central Government will have the right to declare any species as a vermin species.
- Thus it becomes easy to place any species in the category of vermin species.
- This change could potentially affect 41 species of mammals, 864 birds, 17 reptiles and

amphibians and over 58 insect species.

Requirement of the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 : The Hindu Analysis

- Increasing human-wildlife conflict poses a threat to both animals and humans.
- Incidents such as crop/livestock damage are widely reported from different parts of the country.
- Crop loss of Rs 184.28 crores was recorded by the Agriculture Department of Himachal Pradesh in the year 2016 due to wild animals, especially monkeys.
- Since 2017, Tamil Nadu has recorded 7,562 incidents of wild animals causing damage to agriculture

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‘Nanhi Pari’ program



‘Nanhi Pari’ program – Today Current Affairs

- Recently ‘Nanhi Pari’ program was started by the North-West Delhi district administration.

Today Current Affairs

About the programme:

- The 'Little Pari' program is a scheme to provide a one stop solution to the parents by eliminating the need of going to different offices to get the documents.

Purpose : The Hindu Analysis

- The objective of this program is to fulfill the essential services like providing birth certificate, Aadhar card registration and account opening in case of girls born in government hospitals of the district before discharge of mother and child from the hospital. The Hindu Analysis
- Its other objectives include getting registered in the hospital itself for schemes like Sukanya Samriddhi Account Scheme, Ladli Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana for girls and mothers.
- The basic objective of most of these schemes is to protect the life of the girl child and to provide a safe environment and education facilities for them. The Hindu Analysis
- Apart from ensuring that the schemes reach the target beneficiaries and protect the interests of the girl child, the program also aims to promote institutional delivery.

Importance : The Hindu Analysis

- It makes the planning process as simple as possible for all children and mothers.
- With this, parents will not have to worry about taking advantage of the necessary schemes.

Institutional Delivery : The Hindu Analysis

- It means giving birth in a medical institution under the overall supervision of trained and competent health workers.
- It also signifies the availability of facilities to handle the situation and save the life of mother and child.

Other related initiatives : The Hindu Analysis

- Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)
- Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)
- Prime Minister's Safe Motherhood Campaign (PMSMA)
- Lakshya (Maternity Room Quality Improvement Initiative)
- POSHAN Abhiyaan

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Organization of islamic cooperation



Organization of islamic cooperation – Today Current Affairs

- Recently Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) criticized the comments made by two Indians on Prophet Muhammad.
- The Ministry of External Affairs rejected the comments of the OIC, saying that the views expressed by citizens do not reflect the views of the Government of India.
- Earlier, India had criticized the OIC for its communal thinking in the midst of the Karnataka hijab controversy.

Today Current Affairs

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):

- This organization represents the collective of the Muslim world around the world.
- It was formed during the historic summit in Rabat, Morocco in September 1969, with the goal of protecting Islamic values following the 1969 arson of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by a 28-year-old Australian.

Member : The Hindu Analysis

- The number of its member countries is 57.

Purpose : The Hindu Analysis

- To establish solidarity among the OIC member states.
- To support the restoration of the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of any occupied Member State.
- To protect Islam, defend it and oppose its condemnation.
- To prevent growing discontent in Muslim societies and to ensure that Member States remain united in the United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council and other international fora.

Headquarters: Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). The Hindu Analysis

- The organization plans to permanently move its headquarters to East Jerusalem after the disputed city of Jerusalem is 'liberated'.
- In addition, it holds Israel responsible for 'war crimes' and violations of international law.

OIC Charter : The Hindu Analysis

- The organization follows a charter which sets out its objectives, principles and operating mechanism. First adopted in 1972, the Charter has been amended several times to suit the evolving circumstances of developing countries.
- The current charter was adopted in Dakar, Senegal in March 2008.
- It entails that all members be guided and inspired by Islamic teachings and values, as well as committing themselves to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Working of OIC:

Membership : The Hindu Analysis

- Members of the Muslim-majority United Nations can join this organization.
- Membership in the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC is confirmed with full consent.
- The same provisions apply for obtaining supervisor status.

Decision Process : The Hindu Analysis

- All decision-making in the organization requires the presence of two-thirds of the member states and a defined quorum with full consent.
- If consensus is not reached, the decision is made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.
- The Council of Foreign Ministers is the main decision-making body and meets annually to decide how to implement the general policies of the OIC.
- They make decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest, review their

progress, consider and approve programs and their budgets, consider specific issues plaguing Member States, and form a new organ or recommend setting up of a committee.

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Ramsay Hunt Syndrome



Ramsay Hunt Syndrome – Today Current Affairs

- Recently pop singer Justin Bieber has been affected by ‘Ramsay Hunt syndrome’.

Today Current Affairs

Ramsay Hunt Syndrome:

- Ramsay Hunt syndrome, also known as ‘herpes zoster oticus’, is a viral infection of the ‘geniculate ganglion’ (7th cranial nerve) of the facial nerve, which occurs when the infection affects the facial nerves does.
- This causes the nerves to become inflamed, so they lose their ability to function, causing temporary facial paralysis. The Hindu Analysis
- There are 12 cranial nerves in the body. Ramsay Hunt syndrome is a viral infection that affects the 7th cranial nerve, which is involved in facial movements.
- Only five to 10 out of every 100,000 people are affected by Ramsay Hunt syndrome each year, making it an extremely rare disorder.

Cause : The Hindu Analysis

- Ramsay Hunt syndrome is caused by reactivation of the varicella zoster virus, which has previously caused chickenpox and shingles in the patient.
- This virus belongs to the herpesvirus group which can be found in the body as a latent infection.
- The varicella zoster virus can reactivate due to a weakening of the immune system.
- Although it is not a contagious disease, it may cause chickenpox in people who have not been vaccinated against the disease.

Symptoms : The Hindu Analysis

- The disease starts as red colored patches which become the cause of inflammation in the rash of the patches. Sometimes the rash can affect the eardrum, ear canal, ear lobe, tongue and mouth along with the affected nerve.

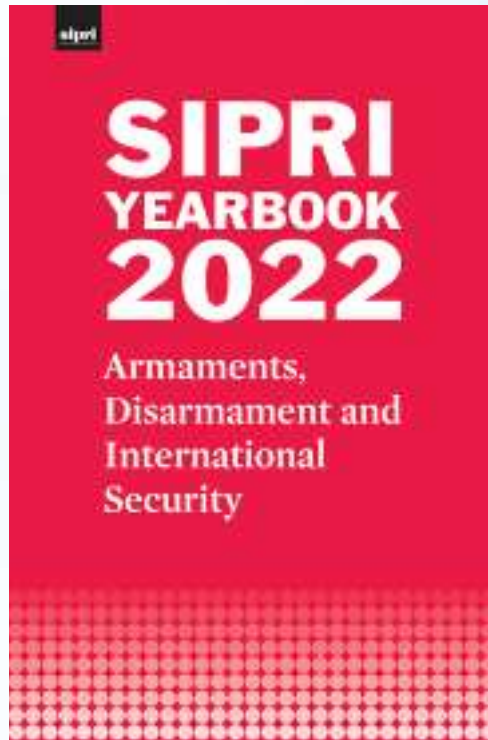
Remedy : The Hindu Analysis

- Antiviral therapy and corticosteroids (anti-inflammatory drugs) are commonly used to treat this condition.

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SIPRI Yearbook 2022



SIPRI Yearbook 2022 – Today Current Affairs

- Recently the ‘SIPRI Yearbook 2022’ report was released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which assesses the current status of weapons, disarmament and international security.

Today Current Affairs

SIPRI:

- It is an international institute dedicated to research in war, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was established in the year 1966 in Stockholm (Sweden).
- It provides data, data analysis and recommendations based on transparent sources to policy makers, researchers, media and informed citizens.

Nuclear weapon:

Global Scenario : The Hindu Analysis

- Nine nuclear-armed countries—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France,

China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)—continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals, although between January 2021 and January 2022 the total number of nuclear weapons has declined slightly, but will likely increase over the next decade.

India : The Hindu Analysis

- India had 160 nuclear warheads as of January 2022 and appears to be expanding its nuclear arsenal.
- Nuclear weapons are the explosive heads of missiles or torpedoes that use nuclear energy.
- India's nuclear stockpile increased from 156 in January 2021 to 160 in January 2022.

China : The Hindu Analysis

- Like in January 2021, China had 350 nuclear weapons in January 2022 as well.
- India does not share official data on its nuclear arsenal.
- Russia and the US together have more than 90% nuclear weapons.

Major arms importers : The Hindu Analysis

- SIPRI identified 164 states as major arms importers in 2016-20.

Country wise : The Hindu Analysis

- The five largest arms importers were Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and China, accounting for 36% of total arms imports.

Region wise : The Hindu Analysis

- The regions that received the largest amounts of major arms supplies in 2016-20 were Asia and Oceania, accounting for 42% of global total supplies, followed by the Middle-East which received 33%.

Major Weapons Suppliers : The Hindu Analysis

- The United States, Russia, France, Germany and China accounted for a total of 76% of major arms exports from 2016 to 2020, the five largest supplier countries.

Important Steps in Nuclear Diplomacy:

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) : The Hindu Analysis

- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) came into force in January 2021 after receiving the ratification of the required 50 countries.

New Star : The Hindu Analysis

- The US-Russia arms control agreement New START treaty was extended for five years.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) : The Hindu Analysis

- Re-engage at the start of negotiations on the United States returning to the Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons : The Hindu Analysis

- The Nuclear-Armed Permanent Members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council reaffirmed their commitment to non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control agreements and commitments as well as to abide by their obligations under the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Barriers to Nuclear Diplomacy : The Hindu Analysis

- All P5 members continue to expand or modernize their nuclear arsenals and appear to be increasing the importance of nuclear weapons in their military strategies.
- Russia has also openly threatened the use of nuclear weapons in the context of the war in Ukraine.
- The war has stalled bilateral Russia-USA strategic stability talks and no other nuclear-rich state is abiding by arms control talks.
- In addition, the P5 members of the UNSC have voiced their opposition to the TPNW and the JCPOA negotiations have not yet reached a conclusion.

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Agneepath Scheme



Agneepath Scheme – Today Current Affairs

- Recently the government has unveiled the Agneepath scheme for the recruitment of soldiers in all the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force).

Today Current Affairs

Agneepath Scheme:

- It allows patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the armed forces for a period of four years.
- Under this scheme, the youth joining the army will be called Agniveer and the youth will be able to join the army for some time.
- Under the new scheme, about 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually and most will leave the service in just four years.
- However, after four years only 25% of the batch will be re-admitted to their respective services for a period of 15 years.

Eligibility criteria : The Hindu Analysis

- It is only for personnel below the rank of officer (who do not join the army as commissioned officers).
- Commissioned officers are the highest rank officers of the army.
- Commissioned officers hold a special rank in the Indian Armed Forces. They are often commissioned under the sovereign power of the President and are officially instructed to defend the country.
- Candidates between the age of 17.5 years to 21 years will be eligible to apply.

Purpose : The Hindu Analysis

- It aims to provide an opportunity to the patriotic and motivated youth to join the armed forces with 'Josh' and 'Passion'.
- This is expected to reduce the average age profile of the Indian Armed Forces by about 4 to 5 years.
- The scheme envisages that the average age at present in the Armed Forces is 32 years, which will be reduced from 6-7 years to 26 years.

Benefits to Agniveers : The Hindu Analysis

- Agniveers on completion of 4 years of service will be paid a lump sum 'Seva Nidhi' package of Rs.11.71 lakh which will include interest earned by them.
- They will also get a life insurance cover of Rs 48 lakh for four years.
- In case of death an amount exceeding Rs.1 crore including salary for the unpaid tenure.
- The government will help in the rehabilitation of soldiers who leave the service after four years. They will be provided with skill certificates and bridge courses.

Related concerns:

Difficult to find another job : The Hindu Analysis

- In the first year of the 'Agnepath' scheme, about 45,000 soldiers in the Army, Navy and Air Force will be recruited on short-term contracts of four years. Apart from 25% of them, the rest will have to be released from military service after the completion of the contract.
- Four years of service would mean that other jobs would be out of their reach after that and soldiers who completed four years would not be eligible for re-service.

No Pension Benefit : The Hindu Analysis

- Jawans appointed under the Agnepath scheme will be given a lump sum amount of little more than Rs 11 lakh at the end of their four-year term.
- Although they will not receive any pension benefits, in such a situation it will be necessary for most to find another job to support themselves and their families.

Training remaining unused : The Hindu Analysis

- The army will lose experienced soldiers.
- Soldiers joining the Army, Navy and Air Force will be given technical training to support ongoing operations but these men and women will be out of service after four years, which can create a void.

Importance of such a step for the country:

Future Ready Soldier : The Hindu Analysis

- It will create “future ready” troops.
- More job opportunities:
- This will increase employment opportunities and due to the skill and experience gained during the four years of service, such soldiers will get employment in various fields.

Highly Skilled Workforce : The Hindu Analysis

- This will also lead to the availability of a highly-skilled workforce for the economy, which will lead to productivity gains and overall GDP growth.

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Remission



Remission – Today Current Affairs

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued guidelines to states and union territories to give special exemption to prisoners on the occasion of 75th year of independence.

Today Current Affairs

Guidance:

Special Avoidance:

- A certain category of prisoners will be given special exemption as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations. These prisoners will be released in three phases.

Eligibility : Today Current Affairs

- Female and transgender prisoners aged 50 years and above and male prisoners aged 60 years and above.
- These prisoners will have to complete 50% of their total sentence without counting the period of normal remission earned.
- Physically handicapped prisoners with a disability of 70% or more who have completed 50% of their total sentence.
- Critically ill convicted prisoners who have completed two-thirds (66%) of their total sentences.
- Poor or impoverished prisoners who have completed their sentences but are still in jail for not paying the fines imposed on them.
- Persons who have committed an offense at a young age (18-21) and have no other criminal involvement or case against them and have completed 50% of their term of sentence will also be eligible.

Prisoners excluded from the scheme : The Hindu Analysis

- Persons convicted with a sentence of death or where the sentence of death has been commuted to imprisonment for life or has been convicted of an offense for which the death penalty is specified as one of the punishments is.
- Persons convicted with a sentence of imprisonment for life.
- Offender or convicted person involved in terrorist activities – Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985; Terrorist Prevention Act, 2002; Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967; Explosives Act, 1908; National Security Act, 1982; Official Secrets Act, 1923 and Anti-hijacking Act, 2016.
- Protection of Child Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to make punishment for dowry death, counterfeit notes, sexual offenses against children more stringent; Immoral Trafficking Act, 1956; Offenses against the State (Chapter-VI of the IPC) in the case of persons convicted of offenses under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 etc. and any other law which the State Governments or Union Territory Administrations may deem fit to exclude, are not eligible for special exemption.

Remission : The Hindu Analysis

- Remission is the complete cessation of a punishment or punishment at a point. Remission differs from both furlough and parole in that it is a reduction in punishment as opposed to a break from prison life.
- In avoidance the nature of the punishment remains untouched, while the duration is reduced, i.e. the remaining punishment does not need to be passed.
- The effect of remission is that the prisoner is given a fixed date on which he will be released and will be a free person in the eyes of the law.
- However, in case of breach of any condition of the remission exemption, it shall be quashed and the offender shall serve the full term for which he was originally sentenced.

Background : The Hindu Analysis

- The avoidance system is defined under the Prisons Act, 1894, a set of rules in force for the time being, which regulates prisoners in prison to assess their behavior and consequently reduce punishment.
- In *Kehar Singh Vs Union of India* (1989) it was observed that the Court cannot refuse to consider a prisoner for exemption from sentence.
- The refusal by the court will make the prisoner to remain in jail till his last breath, he cannot be expected to be free.
- This would not only be against the principles of reform, but it would push the offender into a dark environment without a glimmer of light till the end of his life.
- The Supreme Court also observed in *State of Haryana Vs. Mahendra Singh* (2007) that even though it is not a fundamental right to remit a convict, the State has to take into account each individual case while exercising its executive power of remission. Considering the relevant and relevant factors should be considered.
- Apart from this, the Court was also of the view that the right to be considered for exemption should be treated as legal.
- This provision has been made keeping in mind the constitutional safeguards for the guilty under Articles 20 and 21 of the Constitution.

Constitutional Provisions : The Hindu Analysis

- Both the President and the Governor have been given the sovereign power of pardon by the Constitution.
- Under Article 72, the President can pardon, commute, suspend or suspend or suspend or reduce the sentence of any person.
- It may in all cases be done for any person convicted of any offence, where:
- Punishment by court-martial, in all cases where the punishment is in relation to an offense under any law relating to the executive power of the Central Government and in

all cases of capital punishment.

- Under Article 161, the Governor can pardon, suspend, suspend or remit a sentence, or suspend, remove or reduce the sentence.
- It can be done for any person convicted under any law in a matter falling within the executive power of the State.
- The ambit of the pardoning power of the President under Article 72 is wider than the pardoning power of the Governor under Article 161.

Statutory Power of Remission : The Hindu Analysis

- The Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC) provides for remission of prison sentence, which means that the whole or a part of the sentence can be revoked.
- Under section 432 the 'appropriate Government' may suspend or waive any punishment in whole or in part, with or without conditions.
- Any punishment under section 433 can be commuted by the appropriate government.
- This power is available to the State Governments to order the release of prisoners before completing their jail term.

Terminology : The Hindu Analysis

- **Pardon** – In this both punishment and imprisonment are removed and the guilty is completely freed from punishment, punishments and disqualifications.
- **Commutation** – It means to change the nature of punishment such as changing the death sentence to rigorous imprisonment.
- **Remission** – Change in the period of punishment such as changing the rigorous imprisonment of 2 years to 1 year of rigorous imprisonment.
- **Respite** – Reducing the punishment due to special circumstances. For example, due to physical disability or pregnancy of women.
- **Reprieve** – The process of postponing a punishment for some time. For example, postponing the hanging for some time.

Swadeep Kumar

Bharat Gaurav Scheme



Bharat Gaurav Scheme – Today Current Affairs

- India's first private train has been flagged off from Coimbatore under the Bharat Gaurav scheme.
- The train will cover several historical sites on the route, giving passengers an insight into the country's cultural heritage.

Today Current Affairs

Bharat Gaurav Scheme:

- Under this scheme launched in November 2021, now a third section will be set up for tourism in trains. Till now the railways had a passenger section and a goods section.
- These are not regular trains which will run according to a timetable but will be operated on the lines of Ramayana Express run by IRCTC.
- It was announced under theme based tourist circuit trains. These trains will be run by both private partners and IRCTC in a theme based circuit.
- By Theme Based Tourism (Circuit) Railways means those trains like Guru Kripa which are operated to all the places related to Guru Nanak or Ramayana themed trains are operated to the places related to Lord Ram.
- One can apply to societies, trusts, consortiums and even state governments for acquisition of these trains and they can be operated on theme based special tourist circuits.
- The service provider will provide all-inclusive packages to the tourists including train travel, hotel/resting place, sightseeing arrangement, historical/heritage sightseeing, tour guide etc.

Benefits of the plan : The Hindu Analysis

- These trains will help the people of India and the world to realize the vision of India's rich cultural heritage and grand historical sites.
- It will also help in tapping India's vast tourism potential.

Other Related Schemes:

Swadesh Darshan Scheme : The Hindu Analysis

- Swadesh Darshan, a central sector scheme was launched in the year 2014-15 for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country.

Prasad Scheme : The Hindu Analysis

- The 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Promotion Campaign' (PRASAD) was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15 with the objective of holistic development of identified pilgrimage sites.

Buddhist Conference : The Hindu Analysis

- It is held every alternate year with the aim of promoting India as a Buddhist destination and major markets around the world.

Dekho Apna Desh Initiative : The Hindu Analysis

- It is an initiative to encourage citizens to travel widely within the country and explore the unique things of India to enable the development of domestic tourism facilities and infrastructure in tourist destinations in the country.

Status of Tourism in India : The Hindu Analysis

- Tourism in India is important for the country's economy and is growing rapidly.
- According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the contribution of the travel and tourism industry to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at US\$ 121.9 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach US\$ 512 billion by the year 2028.
- In India, the industry's direct contribution to GDP is expected to register an annual growth rate of 10.35% between 2019 and 2028.
- Also, the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 ranked India 34th out of 140 countries overall, reflecting India's efforts to improve the sector.

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Missile Prithvi-II



Missile Prithvi-II – Today Current Affairs

- Recently India successfully test-fired Prithvi-II, a short-range ballistic missile capable of surface-to-surface, at night.
- Earlier, the intermediate range ballistic missile Agni-IV was test-fired which 4,000 km long was Distance can be covered.

Today Current Affairs

Salient Features of Prithvi-II Missile:

- Prithvi-II is an indigenously developed surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) with a range of about 250-350 km. And it can carry one ton payload.
- The Prithvi-II class is a single-stage liquid-fueled missile, with a range of 500–1000 kg warhead mounting capability.
- This missile system is capable of hitting targets with a very high degree of accuracy.
- The state-of-the-art missile uses an advanced inertial guidance system with efficient trajectory to hit its target.
- It was initially developed as the primary user for the Indian Air Force and was later inducted into the Indian Army as well.
- While the missile was first inducted into India's Strategic Forces Command in 2003, it was the first missile developed under the IGMDP.

Construction : The Hindu Analysis

- Under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) of India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

Prithvi Missile : The Hindu Analysis

- The Prithvi missile system consists of various strategic surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs).
- Its development started in the year 1983 and it was India's first indigenous ballistic missile.
- Its first test was done in the year 1988 from SHAR Center, Sriharikota.
- Its range is 150-300 km.
- The naval variant of Prithvi I and Prithvi III class missiles is code-named Dhanush.
- The propulsion technology was based on the Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missile.

Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missile : The Hindu Analysis

- Developed in the mid-1950s, the Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missile was the Soviet Union's first effective surface-to-air missile.
- It was designed as a primary nuclear weapon for a battlefield missile that could carry a nuclear warhead.
- Prithvi I missile is serving in the Indian Army since 1994.
- Reportedly, Prahar missiles are being replaced with Prithvi I missiles.
- Prithvi II missiles are in service since 1996.
- 350 kms. Prithvi III with a more extended range of K was successfully test fired in the year 2004.

Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) : The Hindu Analysis

- IGMDP was a program of the Indian Ministry of Defense for research and development of a wide range of missiles.
- The project was started in the year 1982-1983 under the leadership of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam
- This program made Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam the Missile Man of India.
- The Integrated Guided Missile Program was completed in the year 2008.

Five missiles developed under IGMDP : The Hindu Analysis

- The 5 missiles (P-A-T-N-A) developed under this program are:
- Prithvi: Short-range ballistic missile capable of surface-to-surface strikes.
- Agni: A medium-range ballistic missile capable of surface-to-surface attack, i.e. Agni (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
- Trishul: Short-range surface-to-air missile.
- Nag: Third generation anti-tank missile.
- Akash: A medium-range surface-to-air missile.

Handicrafts and One District One Product Scheme



Handicrafts and One District One Product Scheme – Today Current Affairs

- Recently the Ministry of Textiles inaugurated 'Lota Shop' at the National Crafts Museum, New Delhi.
- This shop was opened by Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India Limited (CCIC), which is known as Central Cottage Industries Emporium.
- It displays the finest handicrafts, souvenirs, handicrafts and textiles based on the traditional craft forms of India.
- The government also reiterated that it is working towards 'One District One Product' which will give impetus to the handicrafts sector as well as the artisans.

Today Current Affairs

One District One Product:

- 'One District One Product' (ODOP) was launched by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to enable districts to consume their full potential, promote economic and socio-cultural development and generate employment opportunities especially in rural areas.
- It was launched in January, 2018 by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, and later adopted by the Central Government due to its success.

- This initiative is taken by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Commerce along with the 'Districts as Exports Hub' initiative.
- The 'Districts as Export Hub' initiative provides financial and technical assistance to district level industries to help small scale industries and provide employment opportunities to the local people.

Purpose : The Hindu Analysis

- Its objective is to identify, promote and brand the product of a district.
- To transform every district of India into an export hub through promotion of the product in which the district specializes.
- It envisions to accomplish this by promoting manufacturing, supporting local businesses, locating potential overseas customers and so on, hence helping to achieve the vision of 'Self-reliant India'.

Status of Handicrafts Sector in India : The Hindu Analysis

- Handicrafts are those goods which are manufactured on a large scale using simple tools rather than production methods and tools. While similar to basic arts and crafts, there is a significant difference with handicrafts.
- These goods produced as a result of various efforts are designed to maintain the beauty of nature along with a specific function or use.
- The handloom and handicrafts industry has been the backbone of India's rural economy for decades.
- India produces wooden utensils, metal wares, hand printed garments, embroidered wares, zari wares, imitation jewellery, idols, pottery, glassware, attar, incense sticks etc.

Business : The Hindu Analysis

- India is one of the largest handicrafts exporting countries.
- In March 2022, the total handicraft exports from India excluding handmade carpets stood at US\$ 174.26 million, an increase of 8% over February 2022. The total export of Indian handicrafts during the year 2021-22 stood at US\$ 4.35 billion, a growth of 25.7% over the previous year.
- Importance of this area:

Largest employer : The Hindu Analysis

- It is one of the largest employment generators after agriculture, providing a major means of livelihood to the rural and urban population of the country.
- Handicrafts is one of the most important sectors in the Indian economy, employing more than seven million people.

Eco-Friendly : The Hindu Analysis

- The sector operates on a self-sustaining business model, in which craftsmen often produce their own raw materials and are known to be pioneers of eco-friendly zero-waste practices.

Challenges : The Hindu Analysis

- Artisans face challenges like non-availability of funds, low access to technology, lack of market knowledge and poor institutional framework for development.
- In addition, the sector suffers from inherent contradictions in handmade products, which are generally contrary to the scale of production.

Factors supporting the growth of this sector:

Government Schemes : The Hindu Analysis

- The Central Government is actively working towards developing the industry to maximize its potential.
- Launching of several schemes and initiatives is helping craftsmen to overcome the challenges they face.

Rise of Dedicated Trading Platforms : The Hindu Analysis

- Few platforms like Craftezy have emerged that provide much needed support to Indian artisans in the domestic and global markets.
- These global handicrafts trading platforms act as a free supplier induction process and it aims to give India an organized image in the global market.

Using Technology for Inclusion : The Hindu Analysis

- Technology which can help in crossing boundaries has proved to be a boon for the handicrafts industry.
- E-commerce has opened doors for seamless access to consumer goods and has enabled inclusive growth as all manufacturers in any part of the world can showcase their products through these online platforms.
- Even social media platforms are helping a lot in marketing Indian handicrafts globally.

Export vs. Import : The Hindu Analysis

- In the last five years, the export of Indian handicrafts has grown by more than 40%, as three-fourth of the handicrafts are exported.
- Indian handicrafts are mainly exported to over a hundred countries and the US alone imports almost a third of India's handicraft exports.

Changes in the Behavior of Artisans : The Hindu Analysis

- Increase in income as artisans adapt to new skills to create products that meet new market demands.
- Thus, due to the introduction of technology and its easy use, there has been a significant change in the behavior of sellers and buyers of handicrafts.

Related Government Initiatives:

Ambedkar Handicrafts Development Scheme : The Hindu Analysis

- To support artisans with their infrastructure, technology and human resource development needs.
- The objective of the scheme is to organize artisans into self-help groups and societies with an agenda of facilitating bulk production and economy in the purchase of raw materials.

Mega Cluster Scheme : The Hindu Analysis

- The objective of the scheme includes employment generation and improvement in the standard of living of the artisans.
- The program follows a cluster-based approach in augmenting infrastructure and production chains, especially in handicraft centers in remote areas.

Marketing Support and Service Plan : The Hindu Analysis

- The scheme provides intervention in the form of financial assistance to artisans for domestic marketing programs that help them organize and participate in trade fairs and exhibitions in the country and abroad.

Research and Development Plan : The Hindu Analysis

- The initiative was launched to generate feedback on the economic, social, aesthetic and promotional aspects of crafts and artisans in the region, with the objective of supporting the implementation of the above schemes.

National Handicraft Development Programme : The Hindu Analysis

- The important components of this program are surveying, upgradation of design and technology, development of human resource, providing insurance and credit facilities to artisans, R&D, infrastructure development and marketing support activities.

Comprehensive Handicraft Cluster Development Scheme : The Hindu Analysis

- The vision of this scheme is to enhance the infrastructure and production chain in handicraft clusters. In addition, the scheme aims to provide adequate infrastructure for production, value addition and quality assurance.

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts : The Hindu Analysis

- The main objective of the Council is to promote, support, protect, maintain and enhance the export of handicrafts.
- Other activities of the Council include dissemination of knowledge, providing professional advice and assistance to the members, organizing delegation visits and fairs, providing liaison between exporters and the Government and conducting awareness workshops.

Swadeep Kumar

I2U2 Initiative



I2U2 Initiative – Today Current Affairs

- India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the US will hold their first virtual summit in July 2022 as a part of the I2U2 initiative.

Today Current Affairs

I2U2 Initiatives:

Background:

- Initially I2U2 was formed following the Abrahamic Agreement between Israel and the

UAE in October 2021 to deal with issues related to maritime security, infrastructure and transport in the region.

- At that time it was called 'International Forum for Economic Cooperation'.
- It was also called 'West Asian Quad'.

Introduction : The Hindu Analysis

- The I2U2 initiative is a new grouping of India, Israel, USA and UAE.
- The 'I2' in the group's name stands for India and Israel, while 'U2' stands for the United States and the United Arab Emirates.
- This is a major achievement which reflects the geopolitical changes taking place in the region.
- It will not only revive and reactivate the system of alliances and partnerships around the world, but will also add to partnerships that did not exist before or were not fully utilized.
- Importance:

Security Support : The Hindu Analysis

- This will help countries explore security cooperation between the four countries within the framework of these new groups.

Technical Center : The Hindu Analysis

- Each of these countries is a technical hub.
- Biotechnology is certainly dominant in each of these countries.

Food security : The Hindu Analysis

- This initiative provides an opportunity to discuss food security.
- Working together in different areas : The Hindu Analysis
- These countries can cooperate at many levels, be it technology, trade, climate, fight against COVID-19 or security.

Importance of I2U2 for India:

Benefits from the Abrahamic Pact : The Hindu Analysis

- India will get the benefit of the Abraham Accords to strengthen ties with Israel without risking its ties with the UAE and other Arab states.

Market advantage : The Hindu Analysis

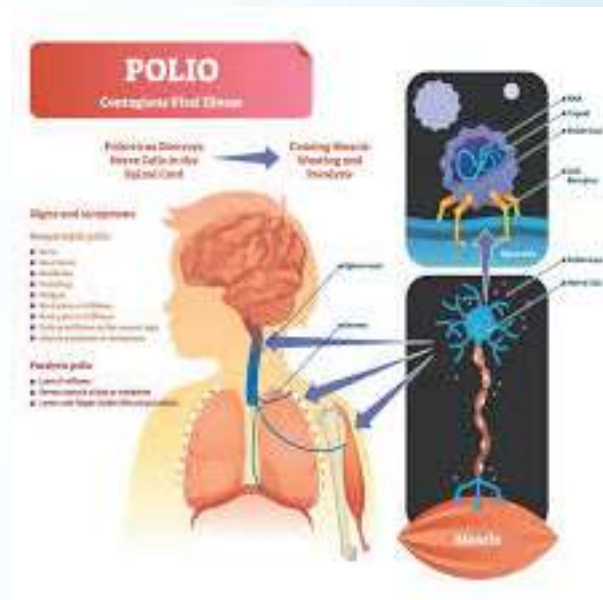
- India is a huge consumer market. It is also a major producer of high-tech and highly sought-after goods. India will benefit from this grouping.

Alliance : The Hindu Analysis

- It will help India to build political and social alliances.

Swadeep Kumar

Polio virus



Polio virus – Today Current Affairs

- Recently, the presence of 'Vaccine-Derived Poliovirus-VDPV' was found during 'Environmental Surveillance of Sewage Samples' in Kolkata.
- Most likely it has increased manifold due to lack of immunity. This is not a case of human-to-human polio transfer.
- VDPV is a variant of weakened poliovirus, it was initially included in OPV (Oral Polio Virus Vaccine) and which mutated over time and behaves like wild or naturally occurring virus.

Today Current Affairs

What is polio?

- Polio is a disabling and potentially fatal viral infectious disease that affects the nervous system.

There are mainly three distinct strains of the polio virus immunologically:

- Wild Polio Virus 1 (WPV1)
- Wild Polio Virus 2 (WPV2)
- Wild Polio Virus 3 (WPV3)
- All three strains are characteristically similar and can cause paralysis and death.
- Although there are genetic and virological differences, making these three strains distinct viruses, each needs to be eliminated singly.

Spreading : The Hindu Analysis

- This virus is mainly transmitted from person to person through the 'faecal-oral route' or through contaminated water or food.
- It mainly affects children under the age of 5. The virus increases in number in the intestine, where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.

Symptoms : The Hindu Analysis

- Most people with polio do not feel sick. In some people only minor symptoms are found, such as- fever, fatigue, nausea, headache, pain in hands and feet etc.
- In rare cases, polio infection causes permanent loss of muscle function (paralysis).
- Polio can be fatal if the muscles used for breathing become paralyzed or if there is an infection in the brain.

Prevention and cure : The Hindu Analysis

- There is no cure but it can be prevented by vaccination.

Vaccination : The Hindu Analysis

- **Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV):** It is given at birth during institutional delivery, followed by three primary doses at 6, 10 and 14 weeks and a booster dose at 16-24 months of age.
- **Injectable Polio Vaccine (IPV):** This is given as an additional dose with the third dose of DPT (Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus) under the Universal Immunization Program (UIP).

Recent Outbreaks : The Hindu Analysis

- In 2019, polio outbreaks were reported in the Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Myanmar, China, Cameroon, Indonesia and Iran, which were mostly vaccine-derived, in which a rare strain of the virus is genetically mutated from the strain in the vaccine.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), if the virus is excreted and allowed to circulate in an unimmunized or less-immunized population for at least 12 months, it can cause infection.

India and Polio : The Hindu Analysis

- India got polio-free certification by WHO in the year 2014 after zero cases during three years.
- This achievement is inspired by the successful Pulse Polio campaign in which all children were administered polio medicine.
- The last case of wild polio virus in the country was reported on January 13, 2011.

Polio Eradication Measures:

Global Polio Eradication Initiative : The Hindu Analysis

- It was launched by national governments and WHO under the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in the year 1988. Currently 80% of the world's population is polio free.
- An estimated 1.5 million neonatal deaths have been prevented through systematic administration of vitamin A during polio vaccination activities.

World Polio Day : The Hindu Analysis

- It is observed every year on 24 October to call upon countries to be vigilant in their fight against the disease.

India:

Pulse Polio Program : The Hindu Analysis

- It was started with the aim of achieving 100% coverage under the oral polio vaccine.

Intensive Mission Indradhanush 2.0 : The Hindu Analysis

- It was a nationwide vaccination campaign launched to commemorate 25 years of Pulse Polio Program (Year 2019-20).

Universal Immunization Programme : The Hindu Analysis

- It was started in the year 1985 with amendment in 'Expanded Program of Immunization'.
- Objectives of this program include rapid increase in vaccination coverage, improvement in quality of services, establishment of a reliable cold chain system at the health facility level, achieving self-sufficiency in vaccine production, etc.

Swadeep Kumar