

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development for 2024 will be conferred on former Chilean president and prominent human rights voice Michelle Bachelet, a statement issued by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust said recently.



About Indira Gandhi Peace Prize:

- The Indira Gandhi Peace Prize, also known as the **Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development**, was instituted in the memory of the former prime minister by a trust in her name in 1986.
- It consists of a monetary award of **25 lakh rupees along with a citation**.
- The award is **given to individuals or organisations** who work towards ensuring **international peace and development**, ensuring that scientific discoveries are used to further the scope of freedom and better humanity, and creating a new international economic order.
- **Past recipients** of this award include:
 - Mikhail Gorbachev, former leader of the Soviet Union (1987);
 - UNICEF (1989)
 - Jimmy Carter, former president of the US (1997)
 - UN and its secretary-general Kofi Annan (2003)
 - **Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany (2013)**
 - Indian Space Research Organisation (2014)
 - Former Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh (2017)
 - **Sir David Attenborough (2019)**
 - Pratham NGO (2021)
 - **Indian Medical Association and the Trained Nurses Association of India (2022)**
 - **Daniel Barenboim and Ali Abu Awwad (2023)**

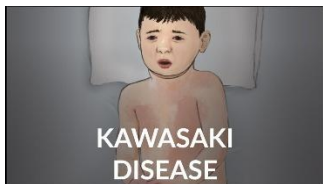
Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

WHAT ARE SACRED GROVES?



- Sacred Groves are patches of natural or near-natural vegetation, dedicated by local communities to their ancestral spirits or deities.
- These groves are protected by local communities, usually through customary taboos and sanctions with ancestral and ecological implications.
- India has well over **13,000 documented sacred groves**. The states particularly rich in abundance of groves are **Kerala, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu**.
- These are known as **Kavu/Sarpa Kavu** in **Kerala**, **Devarakadu/Devkad** in **Karnataka**, **Deorai/Devrai** in **Maharashtra**, **Jahera/Thakuramma** in **Odisha**, e
- The degree of sanctity of the sacred forests varies from one grove to another. For example, the Garo and the Khasi tribes of northeastern India completely prohibit any human interference in the sacred groves.
- The sacred groves are important repositories of floral and faunal diversity that have been conserved by local communities in a sustainable manner.
- They are often the last refuge of endemic species in the geographical region.

WHAT IS THE KAWASAKI DISEASE?



- It is also known as **Kawasaki syndrome** or **mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome**.
- It is a rare disease that causes **fever and inflammation of the blood vessels, mainly in children under 5 years of age**.
- The disease was first described in Japan by Tomisaku Kawasaki in 1967, and the first cases outside of Japan were reported in Hawaii in 1976.

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

- The **cause** of Kawasaki disease is **unknown**, although more cases happen in late winter and early spring.
- It is one of the **most common forms of acquired heart disease in children**.
- The condition **causes the immune system to attack blood vessels**, which become inflamed and swollen.
- It tends to **affect the coronary arteries**, which carry blood to the heart muscle. It can also **cause problems with lymph nodes, skin, and the lining of a child's mouth, nose, and throat**.

Symptoms: Symptoms of Kawasaki disease can appear in two phases and may last several weeks. Common symptoms include:

- A **high fever** lasting more than five days.
- **Red eyes** without discharge.
- A **rash on the body**, often in the chest and groin area.
- **Swollen hands and feet**, sometimes with redness.
- Red, cracked lips and a swollen, red tongue.
- **Swollen lymph nodes**, especially on one side of the neck.

Treatment:

- Kawasaki disease is usually **treated in the hospital with an intravenous (IV) dose of immunoglobulin (IVIG) antibodies**.
- The goals of treatment are to lower fever, reduce swelling, and prevent heart damage.

THE NEW PHASE OF WAR IN SYRIA

- The Syrian civil war began around the "**Arab Spring**" of **2010**, which saw uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa against long-standing authoritarian governments.

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

- While some countries, like Tunisia and Egypt, experienced regime change, most movements were suppressed by governments and militaries.
- Social media platforms, especially Twitter, played a role in spreading pro-democracy ideas.
- Foreign powers, including the US and Russia, responded based on their strategic interests.
- **Conflict in Syria**
 - In Syria, protests emerged against President Assad, who has been in power since 2000.
 - While Assad's regime now controls most of the country, some regions remain outside his grasp, including Kurdish-majority areas in the east, parts of the south, and regions controlled by Islamic State offshoots.
- **The 2020 Ceasefire in Idlib**
 - A ceasefire deal brokered by Turkey and Russia in March 2020 brought relative calm to Idlib province.
 - Turkey backs Syrian rebels, while Russia supports the Assad regime. Since the ceasefire, **HTS (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham)**, a former al-Qaeda affiliate, has maintained de facto control of Idlib.
 - HTS, designated a terrorist group by the US, Russia, and Turkey, has a complex relationship with Turkey.
 - Turkey acts as Idlib's protector, shielding it from large-scale attacks by Assad's forces and their Russian allies.
 - Simultaneously, Turkey controls the border, facilitating trade and taxation critical to HTS's operations.

Key players in Syria's long-running civil war

- **Syrian Government**

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

- Led by President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian government has been central to the civil war since 2011.
 - With support from Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah, Assad has regained much of the lost territory.
 - **Hayat Tahrir al-Sham**
 - Initially formed as the Al Nusra Front with ties to the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham emerged as a major jihadist faction by 2016.
 - **United States**
 - The U.S. initially supported opposition groups but shifted focus to fighting the Islamic State from 2014.
 - It provides airstrikes and support to Kurdish forces, maintaining about 900 troops in Syria.
 - **Turkey**
 - Turkey has conducted military interventions mainly against Kurdish-led forces and now controls parts of Syria's northern border.
 - **Russia**
 - A key ally of Assad, Russia has supported the regime with troops, airstrikes, and a military presence at air and naval bases in Syria.
 - **Iran and Hezbollah**
 - Syria is part of Iran's "axis of resistance," with Hezbollah playing a central role in opposing Israel and reducing U.S. influence in the region.
 - **Israel**
 - Israel targets Hezbollah and Iranian positions in Syria, focusing on military personnel, weapons facilities, and transport routes for arms.
 - **Kurdish Forces**
 - The U.S.'s main partner in the fight against the Islamic State, Kurdish forces also face conflicts with Turkey, which views them as linked to a separatist insurgency.
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Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

TUNGSTEN MINING

- Tungsten is a rare, heavy, and dense metal with the highest melting point (3,422°C) among all metals.
- It is known for its exceptional hardness and resistance to heat, corrosion, and wear.
- **Appearance:** Greyish-white, lustrous metal in its pure form.
- Tungsten is considered a "critical mineral" due to its indispensable role in defense, high-tech industries, and clean energy applications.
- **Applications:**
 - **Industrial Tools:**
 - Used in cutting tools, drills, and abrasives due to its hardness and heat resistance.
 - Tungsten carbide, a compound of tungsten, is widely used for manufacturing durable tools.
 - **Electronics:**
 - Filaments in light bulbs, X-ray tubes, and electrical contacts.
 - Semiconductor materials and heating elements in electronics.
 - **Aerospace and Defense:**
 - Alloyed with other metals for high-strength military-grade armor and aerospace components.
 - Used in missile tips and radiation shielding due to its density.
 - **Medical Applications:**
 - Utilized in medical imaging devices and as radiation shielding material in cancer treatments.
 - **Green Energy & High-Tech Applications:**
 - Essential in wind turbines and in the production of superalloys for energy and technology sectors.

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

Tungsten in India:

- **Primary Deposits:**
 - **Rajasthan:** Degana mines in Nagaur district are historically significant for tungsten mining.
 - **Andhra Pradesh:** Scheelite deposits in Srikakulam district.
 - **Karnataka:** Concentrated reserves in Chitradurga and Mysuru regions.
- **Current Status:** India imports a significant portion of its tungsten requirements due to limited domestic production.
- **Global Reserves & Producers:**
 - **Major Tungsten Reserve-Holding Countries:**
 - **China:** Holds the largest tungsten reserves and accounts for over 80% of global production.
 - **Russia and Canada:** Significant reserves and growing production capacity.
 - **Vietnam, Bolivia, and Austria:** Other notable contributors to tungsten mining.
 - **Top Producers:**
 - **China:** Dominates global production due to vast reserves and advanced processing facilities.
 - **Russia:** Increasing production for industrial and defense purposes.
 - **Austria and Bolivia:** Key exporters to international markets.

ANAMALAI TIGER RESERVE



Ghats.

- It is a protected area located at an altitude of 1400 m in the Anamalai Hills of Pollachi and Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu.
- It lies south of the Palakkad gap in the Southern Western

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

- It is surrounded by the **Parambikulam Tiger Reserve** on the east, **Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary**, and **Eravikulam National Park** on the southwestern side.
- The reserve is also surrounded by the **Nenmara, Vazhachal, Malayattur, and Marayur reserved forests of Kerala**.
- It was declared a tiger reserve in the year 2007.

Habitat:

- It supports diverse habitat types, viz. **Wet evergreen forests, semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous, dry deciduous, dry thorn, and shola forest**
- Other unique habitats like montane grasslands, savannah and marshy grasslands are also present.

Flora:

- Around 2500 species of angiosperms are found in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve, with several species of **Balsam, Crotalaria, Orchids, and Kurinchi**.
- The reserve is rich in **wild relatives of cultivated species like mango, jackfruit, wild plantain, ginger (Zingiber officinale), turmeric, pepper (Piper longum), cardamom, etc.**

Fauna: The important wild animals of the reserve include: **Tiger, Asiatic elephant, Sambar, Spotted deer, Barking deer, Jackal, Leopard, Jungle cat, etc.**

KEY FACTS ABOUT JHELUM RIVER



- It is a river of **northwestern India** and **northern and eastern Pakistan**.
- It is a **tributary of the Indus**
- The Jhelum (Vyeth in Kashmiri, Vetesta in Sanskrit, and Hydaspes in Greek) is the **main waterway of the Kashmir valley**.
- It is the **largest and most western of the five rivers of Punjab** and passes through the Jhelum District in the North of Punjab province, Pakistan.

Current Affairs - 08 December 2024

Course:

- **Origin:** It originates at the **Verinag Spring** at Anantnag, at the foot of the **Pir Panjal** range in the **Kashmir Valley**.
- The **river meanders** northwestward from the northern slope of the **Pir Panjal Range** through the **Vale of Kashmir** to **Wular Lake** at **Srinagar**, which controls its flow.
- The river **makes a deep, narrow gorge** on its way to **Pakistan**.
- It **joins the Chenab River** near **Trimmu, Pakistan**.
- **Length:** It has a total length of about 725 km (450 mi).

Major Tributaries:

- The **largest tributary** of the **Jhelum** is the **Kishenganga** (Neelum) River, which joins near **Muzaffarabad** and enters the **Punjab** province, **Pakistan**.
 - The **Kunhar River** is the second largest tributary of the river, which connects **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)** and **Pakistan** on the **Kohala Bridge** of the **Kaghan valley**.
 - Other tributaries include the **Sandran River**, **Bringi River**, **Arapath River**, **Watlara River**, **Lidder River**, and **Veshaw River**.
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