

## Current Affairs of the Day

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## 'NRI quota in professional and technical courses not sacrosanct'

- Private colleges and institutions that offer professional and technical courses have a complete discretion to do away with their Non-Resident Indian (NRI) quota of seats after giving reasonable prior notice, the Supreme Court held on Friday.
- The NRI quota is not sacrosanct and candidates under the quota cannot assert their right to be admitted, the court said in a judgment.

### Key takeaways:

- The 28-page judgment came in an appeal against the change in seat matrix introduced in private medical and dental colleges in Rajasthan for postgraduate courses.
- The colleges argued in court that the NRI seats would not be filled during the pandemic. Besides, many NRI candidates have been considered for the management seats on the basis of merit.
- The verdict referred to the seven-judge Bench decision in P.A. Inamdar, which held that 15% NRI quota was “not compulsory” but “only potential”.
- Justice Bhat, who wrote the verdict, said the apex court had consistently been sceptical about the NRI quota and hence suggested limiting it to 15%.
- The judgment quoted from the Constitution Bench verdict in the Inamdar case, which said the term ‘NRI’ in relation to admissions was itself a “misnomer”.
- “Neither the students who get admissions under this category nor their parents are NRIs. In effect and reality, under this category, less meritorious students, but who can afford to bring more money, get admission,” the judgment quoted.

## Citizen poll throws up three contenders for national butterfly tag





- A citizen poll to identify the national butterfly has concluded with three species garnering the highest number of votes.
- The organisers will submit the names of the top three to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. The onus is on the Centre to choose one among them to join the ranks of the Bengal Tiger, Indian Peacock, Indian Lotus, banyan tree, and mango as yet another national symbol, says Kalesh Sadasivan, one of the core members of the organising group.
- The nationwide poll organised by the National Butterfly Campaign Consortium, a collective of 50 butterfly experts and enthusiasts, from September 10 to the midnight of October 8 yielded 59,754 votes.

### Key takeaways:

- Krishna Peacock (*Papilio krishna*), Indian Jezebel (*Delias eucharis*), and Orange Oakleaf (*Kallima inachus*), the frontrunners, have unique features such as ability to camouflage as a dead leaf, exhibit iridescence to stave off predators, and aid farmers in getting rid of pests.
- Blessed with a vibrant colour pattern, including vermilion (haldi – kumkum), **the Indian Jezebel** (or Common Jezebel) is known to deter its predators with its flashy wing colours. Widely distributed, the species can be spotted in gardens and other lightly wooded areas.
- **Krishna Peacock**, a flagship species for biodiversity and conservation, is generally found in large numbers in the Himalayas.
- **Orange Oakleaf** is commonly known as ‘dead leaf’ for its ability to camouflage as a dry autumn leaf while striking a stationary pose with its wings closed. The masquerade enables the species to prevent it from being devoured by birds in the moist forests of northern Western Ghats, central, northern and northeastern parts of India where they are generally found.

### Senior U.S. official to visit Delhi ahead of 2+2 talks

- In the run-up to the U.S.-India 2+2 foreign and defence Ministers’ meeting this year, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun is scheduled to visit New Delhi from October 12 to 14.
- The dialogue, between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and their American counterparts, Secretary of State



Mike Pompeo and Defence Secretary Mark Esper, is scheduled to be held on October 26 and 27 in New Delhi.

- Mr. Biegun will meet senior government officials and deliver the keynote address at the India-U.S. Forum (a platform convened by the Ananta Centre and the External Affairs Ministry).
- The agenda for the 2+2 is expected to include defence, economic cooperation, and cooperation at multilateral forums, a senior State Department official told reporters last week in Washington.

## Value Added Information

### What are Indo-US 2+2 dialogues?

- The 2+2 dialogue is the highest-level (Ministerial) institutional mechanism between India and the USA that brings together the perspectives of the two countries **on foreign policy, defence and strategic issues**.
- India also holds such dialogue with Japan as well
- India also holds 2+2 dialogue with Australia at the foreign secretary and defence secretary level

## DRDO tests anti-radiation missile

- A new-generation anti-radiation missile, RudraM-I, was successfully flight-tested on Friday by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). This is the first indigenous anti-radiation missile.

### Key takeaways:

- An anti-radiation missile can locate and target radiation-emitting sources such as enemy radars, communication sites and other radio frequency-emitting targets. They can play a key role in neutralising any jamming platforms of the enemy or take out radar stations, thereby clearing a path for fighter jets to carry out an offensive and prevent own systems from being jammed.
- It has a range of up to 200 km depending upon the launch conditions. The missile can be launched from altitudes of 500 m to 15 km and speeds of 0.6 to 2 Mach," the source added.





- The missile, integrated with the SU-30 MkI aircraft, has a capability of varying ranges based on the launch conditions. Having the Inertial Navigation System (INS)-Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation with Passive Homing Head (PHH) for the final attack, it is a potent weapon for the Indian Air Force for suppression of enemy air defence effectively from large stand-off ranges, the DRDO said.
- The PHH can detect, classify and engage targets over a wide band of frequencies.
- The NGARM is being developed by Defence Research Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad, as the nodal agency. It is a joint effort involving DRDO labs, the IAF, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. and several public and private sector enterprises.

## Expect China-style development for Sri Lanka: Gotabaya

- Following his meeting with a high-level delegation from Beijing in Colombo, a statement from the President's office said plans were afoot to recommence discussions on the Sri Lanka-China Free Trade Agreement, and to swiftly complete the China-backed Hambantota Industrial Zone and the Port City in Colombo, a flagship \$1.4 billion project in China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- However, President Rajapaksa sought China's help to reduce the trade deficit between the two countries, the statement said.
- Significantly, the two countries agreed to resume negotiations on the FTA.

## UN's World Food Programme wins 2020 Nobel Peace Prize

- The **United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP)** won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its efforts to combat hunger around the world and improve conditions for peace in areas affected by conflict.
- The Rome-based organisation says it helps some 97 million people in about 88 countries each year, and that one in nine people worldwide still do not have enough to eat.

### Key takeaways:

- There is an estimate within the World Food Programme that... there will be 265 million starving people within a year.



- WFP runs a logistics service that has dispatched medical cargoes to over 120 countries throughout the pandemic to help governments and health partners fighting COVID-19.
- It also has provided passenger services to ferry humanitarian and health workers where commercial flights were unavailable.

## Value Added Information

### About WFP:

- **The World Food Programme (WFP) is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organization** addressing hunger and promoting food security.
- The WFP strives to **eradicate hunger and malnutrition**, with the ultimate goal in mind of eliminating the need for food aid itself.
- **It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.**
- Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life. The WFP is **governed by an Executive Board which consists of representatives from member states.**
- **The WFP operations are funded by voluntary donations from world governments, corporations and private donors.** WFP food aid is also directed to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV and AIDS.

### The objectives of the World Food Programme are:

- Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies.
- Support food security and nutrition and (re)build livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies.
- Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs.
- Reduce under-nutrition and break the inter-generational cycle of hunger.
- Zero Hunger in 2030.



## Indian cotton gets 'Kasturi' branding, logo

- Union Minister for Textiles Smriti Zubin Irani unveiled a brand and a logo for Indian cotton recently.
- According to an official source, the branding — Kasturi Cotton — would initially be applicable to long staple cotton that is grown in India and meets prescribed standards.
- The Minister added that the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) had developed a mobile application called “Cott-Ally” to provide the latest news on weather conditions, the crop situation and best farm practices. The CCI has opened 430 procurement centres in cotton-growing States and payments are made to farmers digitally within 72 hours, she said.