

Current Affairs of the Day

Gene editing guidelines facing delay

Even as the Centre investigates allegations that unauthorised genetically modified (GM) rice was exported to Europe, it is yet to decide on a research proposal from its own scientists which would allow plants to be genetically modified without the need for conventional transgenic technology.

GM Rice:

1. Scientists at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute are in the process of developing resilient and high-yield rice varieties using such gene-editing techniques, which have already been approved by many countries, and they hope to have such rice varieties in the hands of Indian farmers by 2024.
2. However, the proposal for Indian regulators to consider this technique as equivalent to conventional breeding methods, since it does not involve inserting any foreign DNA, has been pending with the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee for almost two years.
3. The IARI has previously worked on golden rice, a traditional GM variety that inserted genes from other organisms into the rice plant, but ended trials over five years ago due to agronomic issues.

New Safer Technologies

1. The Institute has now moved to newer technologies such as Site-Directed Nuclease (SDN)

1 and 2. They aim to bring precision and efficiency into the breeding process using gene-editing tools such as CRISPR.



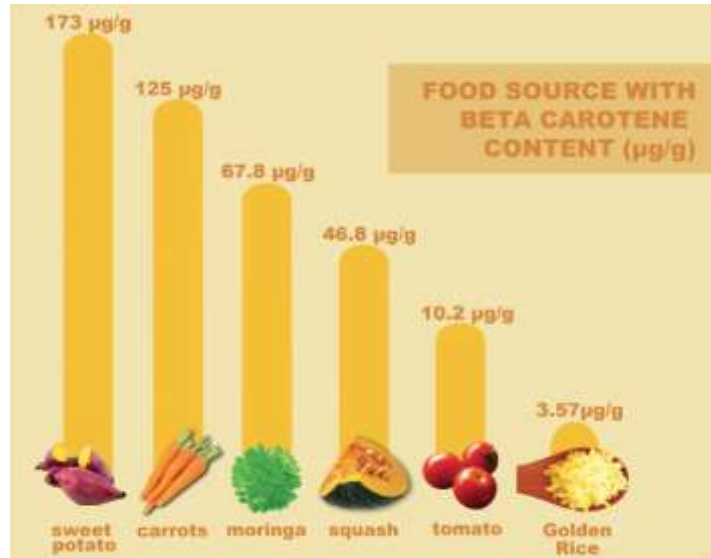


22.10.2021 Friday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

2. In this case, you are just tweaking a gene that is already there in the plant, without bringing in any gene from outside. When a protein comes from an outside organism, then you need to test for safety. But in this case, this protein is right there in the plant and is being changed a little bit, just as nature does through mutation.



3. But it is much faster and far more precise than natural mutation or conventional breeding methods which involve trial and error and multiple breeding cycles.

System to track prisoners on parole

1. The Union Home Ministry has advised the States to update recent photographs of prisoners released on parole/furlough/premature release in the "ePrisons" and Interoperable Criminal Justice System database to generate immediate alerts and facilitate easy tracking in the event of their violating the law.

2. In an advisory sent to the Chief Secretaries, the Ministry said the States and the Union Territories were advised to review the existing practices and procedures governing grant of parole, furlough and premature release to inmates, as per provisions under the

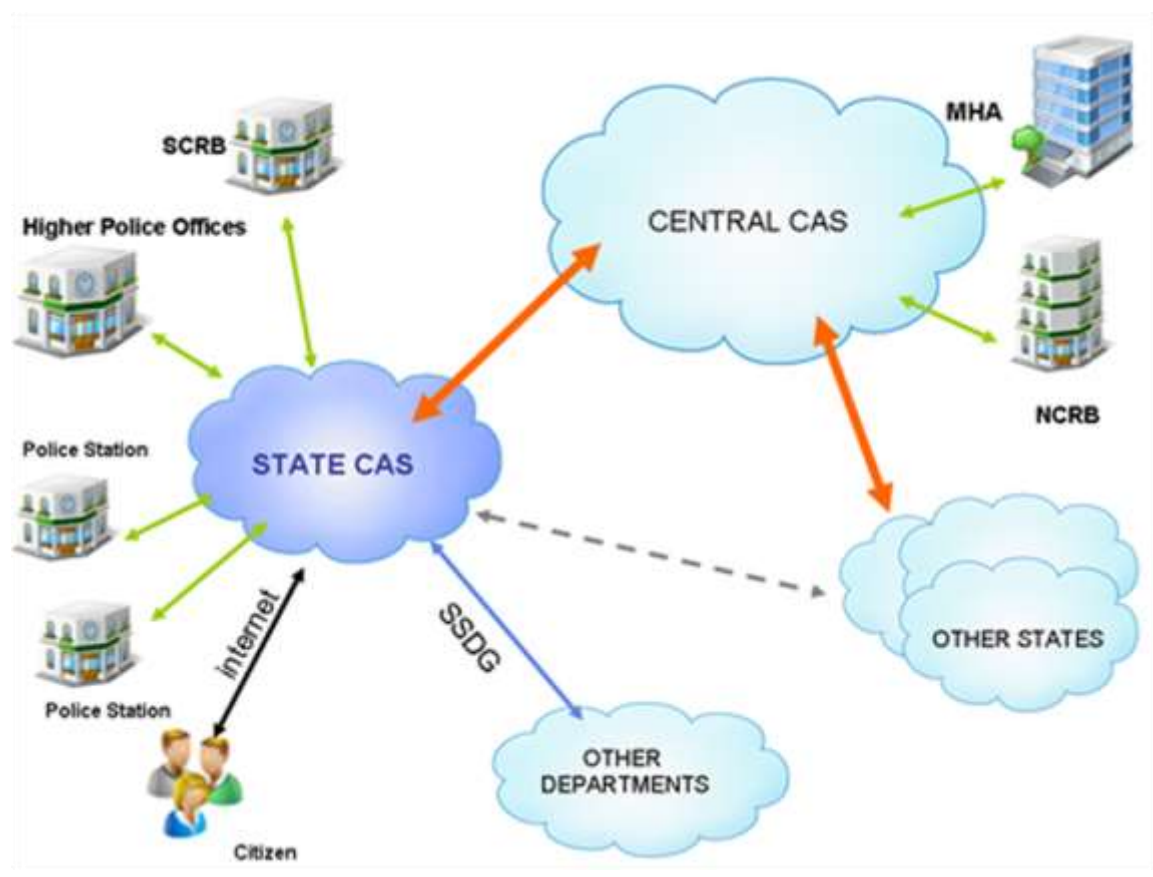


Model Prison Manual, 2016, and guidelines issued by the Home Ministry, the National Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court.

3. It was also advised that in order to ensure that the inmates released on parole, furlough and premature release do not violate the law, systems must be put in place for monitoring and follow-up of each such case.

Generate alerts

1. Taking into account the importance of initiating timely action in the event of any inmate absconding/escaping from custody/prison, it was considered necessary to have recent photographs of the prisoners updated in the system and also generate immediate alerts which would enable tracking of such inmates by the law enforcement agencies.
2. The 'ePrisons' and 'Interoperable Criminal Justice System' platforms could be deployed to address such issues.





KNOW YOUR Fs AND Ps



Sanjay Dutt after reaching home in December last year. (Fotocorp)

FURLOUGH

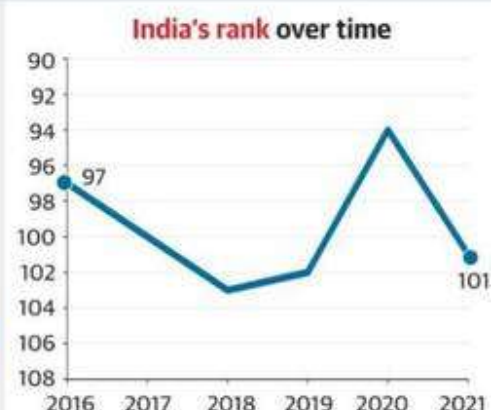
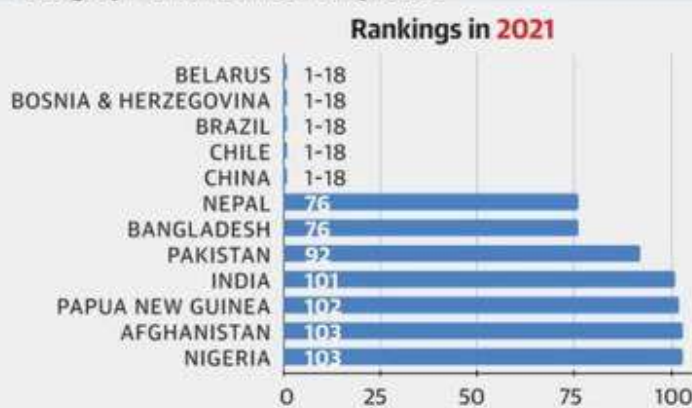
- A matter of right but not many are aware of this. Usually granted after one year in jail. Maximum 21 days a year
- Granted periodically but can be denied if there is sufficient reason that it will go against the interests of society
- Period of furlough is treated as remission of sentence
- No reasons have to be cited for granting furlough
- Purpose is to enable prisoner to retain family association and keep up ties with society and avoid ill-effects of continuous prison life

PAROLE

- Not a matter of right
- May be denied if the competent authority is satisfied on valid grounds that there is no sufficient cause for granting parole or it is against the interests of society
- Grant of parole does not disqualify a prisoner from the right to furlough. The grant of subsequent parole and furlough are subject to police report on the convict's conduct
- Period spent on parole is not counted as remission of sentence. Maximum 90 days a year
- Reasons for granting parole have to be specified by jail authorities

'Govt. failed to measure the scale of hunger to tailor its responses

Alarming levels | The Global Hunger Index (GHI) tracks hunger and malnutrition across countries using four indicators - undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality. Based on this, GHI determines hunger on a 100-point scale, where 0 is the best possible score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. In 2021, India was classified in the "serious category" on the GHI severity scale





THE HINDU
22.10.2021 Friday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

1. While the Government has launched a scathing attack against the publishers of the Global Hunger Index for India's poor ranking, experts argue that not only were steps taken by the Government to check rising levels of hunger in a pandemic year inadequate, it also failed to measure the scale of hunger to tailor its responses.
2. Following the launch of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021, which ranks India 101 out of 116 countries, and worse than Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the Government questioned the methodology used. It also enumerated various schemes it announced since the pandemic to counter hunger.



Hunger Challenges

1. What was promising was that nutrition was at a high point in terms of political agenda and visibility before the pandemic hit.
2. In the minds of frontline workers and everyone else, the idea that you need to continue to do things for nutrition was helped by the fact that pre-pandemic it was a strong agenda system-wide.
3. There was a response from the Government too, be it food allocation from the Centre or more nuanced State government responses. But we don't know whether that was adequate or inadequate.



22.10.2021 Friday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

4. And the only way to know is to relentlessly measure to determine who is hungry, what is the nature and depth of food insecurity, what is it that people want, etc? What we need are population-wide rapid surveys and to make such data available in the public domain.
5. A responsible government should acknowledge the problem and say we will do something about it. The government suppressed the consumption data of their own National Sample Survey because they didn't like the results.

Pandemic steps missed opportunity:

1. We should have given 10 kg of foodgrains and not five kg, and we should have been continuing to offer them today.
2. We should immediately bring back functional anganwadis providing food, and open schools and provide mid-day meals. These are steps that should have been taken months ago.
3. We should also look at the issue of livelihoods, by massively expanding the rural employment guarantee scheme.

Trump to launch the social media platform

1. Former U.S. President Donald Trump, banned from social media platforms Facebook and Twitter since the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, has announced that he is launching a social media company, TRUTH Social, to "stand up to the tyranny of Big Tech".



2. The app is expected to roll out across the U.S. in the first quarter of next year, with a beta version being launched next month. Presumably, a 'TRUTH' is the equivalent of a message or a tweet on Twitter.



MAINS DAWP

Q. Women are emerging as a separate constituency. They are also voting differently from their menfolk. Discuss in this context why do women in legislature matter a lot.

MCQ

*Q1. With reference to India, consider the following statements:
(Prelime 2021)*

- 1. When a prisoner makes out a sufficient case, parole cannot be denied to such prisoner because it becomes a matter of his/her right.*
- 2. State Governments have their own Prisoners Release on Parole Rules.*

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only*
- (b) 2 only*
- (c) Both 1 and 2*
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2*