

Tiananmen memorial

December 25, 2021

In news- Recently, Hong Kong removed the Tiananmen memorial, Pillar of Shame from the University of Hong Kong.

About the memorial-

- The 8-meter (26-foot)-tall sculpture **was constructed in memory of the victims of China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests at Beijing's Tiananmen Square.**
- It is made of bronze, copper and concrete.
- **Danish Sculptor Jens Galschiot had gifted the statue** to the now-disbanded Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China.
- **The Tiananmen massacre, in which hundreds and possibly thousands were killed, was a pivotal moment at which a divided Communist Party leadership** decided to suppress the democracy movement rather than allow it to grow.
- The statue **shows 50 bodies with anguish-ridden faces** piled up together commemorating unarmed student protestors who had been protesting since mid-April in 1989 against corruption, unemployment, inflation, etc., and were killed as Chinese troops opened fire on them.
- These **bodies symbolize the devaluation of the individual**, and the sculpture expresses the pain and despair of what happened.
- It was erected in Hong Kong in 1997 during an annual candlelight vigil to commemorate the event.
- The text at the base of the **sculpture reads, "The old cannot kill the young"** in English and Chinese.
- **Hong Kong was a British colony and not part of China in 1989.**
- After its return to China in 1997, it was given partial democracy, with some of its legislature but not the city's leader chosen by popular vote.
- Demands for greater democracy sparked massive protests in 2014 and 2019.

Other Pillars of Shame-

- They are designed to remind people of events to ensure they don't happen again.
- Ostiense Air Terminal, Rome, Italy, 1996, during the FAO Summit, depicting the deaths caused worldwide by hunger due to the uneven distribution of the world's resources.
- Acteal, Chiapas, Mexico in 1999, to mark the site of the December 1997 massacre of 45 members of the civil society group Las Abejas.
- Brasilia, Brazil in 2000 in homage to the victims of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre which occurred in 1996.
- A fourth Pillar of Shame was planned in Berlin, Germany, in homage to the victims of the Nazi regime but due to various problems, the artist had to cancel the project.