

Election of Speaker

❖ Context

- Recently, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government are locked in a tussle over the election of the Speaker of the Assembly.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Winter Session of the Assembly has ended on Tuesday (December 28), but the Governor has not given his consent to the election programme recommended by the Cabinet.

❖ Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 93 for Lok Sabha and Article 178 for State Assemblies** state that these Houses "shall, as soon as may be", choose two of its members to be Speaker and Deputy Speaker.
- In Lok Sabha and state legislatures, the **President and Governor respectively set a date for the election of the Speaker**, and it is the Speaker who decides the date for the election of the Deputy Speaker.
- **The legislators of the respective Houses vote to elect one among themselves to these offices.**

❖ Roles and Functions of Speaker

- The Speaker is "the principal spokesman of the House, he represents its collective voice and is its sole representative to the outside world".
- The Speaker **presides over the House proceedings and joint sittings** of the two Houses of Parliament.
- It is the Speaker's decision that **determines whether a Bill is a Money Bill** and therefore **outside of the purview of the other House.**
- Usually, the **Speaker comes from the ruling party.** In the case of the Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, the position has varied over the years.
- The **constitution has tried to ensure the independence of the Speaker** by charging his salary on the consolidated Fund of India and the same is not subject to vote of Parliament.

Indian Pangolin

❖ Context

- The **Odisha Forest and Environment Department** has completed its first ever **radio tagging of the Indian pangolin** in an attempt to standardise the rehabilitation protocol for the animal in the State.

❖ Key Highlights

- A **radio-tagged Indian pangolin was released into the wild in Nandankanan Wildlife Sanctuary** following soft release protocols and provision for post-release monitoring.
- **After Madhya Pradesh, Odisha is the second State** in the country to release a radio-tagged Indian pangolin into the wild.

❖ About Indian Pangolin

- Out of the eight species of pangolin, the **Indian Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata)** and the **Chinese Pangolin (Manis pentadactyla)** are found in India.
- Indian Pangolin is a **large anteater covered** by 11-13 rows of scales on the back.
- A **terminal scale** is also present on the lower side of the tail of the Indian Pangolin, which is **absent in the Chinese Pangolin.**
- It has **thick scaly skin.**
- It **hunted for meat and used in traditional Chinese medicine.**
- Pangolins are among the **most trafficked wildlife species** in the world.
- **Protection Status**
 - **IUCN Red List Indian Pangolin: Endangered.**



❖ Nandankanan Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is **located in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.**
- It lies **adjacent to Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary**, in the vicinity of Kanjia lake.
- It is the **only zoological park in India to become an institutional member of World Association of Zoos and Aquarium (WAZA).**
- It is the **only zoo in India after which an express train Puri-New Delhi express has been named as "Nandankanan Express".**
- It is the first zoo in the World to breed **White tiger and Melanistic Tiger.**

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- **Chinese Pangolin: Critically Endangered**
- **Both these species are listed under Schedule I, Part I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**

- It is the **only conservation breeding centre of Indian Pangolins** in the world.

Uranium in Ground water

❖ Context

- Recently, a study by Centres of IISc and Mangalore University found uranium concentration higher than WHO permissible limits in 73 villages of **eastern Karnataka's** Tumkur, Chitradurga districts, Kolar and Chikkaballapura districts

❖ Key highlights

- **None of the borewells** from which water has been sampled is anywhere **in the vicinity of nuclear facilities or urban waste disposal channels**
- The **permissible limit** for uranium concentration in groundwater prescribed by **WHO** and Atomic Energy Regulatory Board is **(30 µg / l)** and **(60 µg/l)** respectively.
- **Chronic exposure** to low-level U isotopes (radionuclides) may be interlinked with **cancer** etiology and at high exposure levels, also **kidney disease**.
- The **soil-water and rock-water interactions** play a **major role** in determining the chemical composition of water.
- Regional gamma-ray spectrometric studies indicate a **higher abundance of uranium in gneisses (a type of rock) and granitoids (category of rock) of Eastern Dharwar Craton** compared to those in Western Dharwar Craton.
- Further, the **soils** in the eastern part of Karnataka being **red loam with laterite** at places, **indicate a higher degree of oxidation of uranous to uranyl ion** during weathering
- As **uranyl phases are soluble in circulating groundwater**, the process leads to a higher concentration of dissolved uranium in groundwater.
- **Oxidative weathering in the deeper levels is facilitated by this decline in groundwater level.**

Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan

❖ Context

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has said that it has planned to declare 100 districts as **"Drug sensitised districts"** soon.

❖ About the Abhiyaan

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the **nodal ministry for Drug demand reduction**
- The Abhiyaan was launched in **August 2020 in 272 high burden districts** with focus on institutional support, community outreach and awareness generation.
- The districts were identified based on inputs from Narcotics Control Bureau and findings of Comprehensive National Survey
- The **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking** is observed every year on **26 June** to spread awareness about drug abuse across the world.

❖ Constitutional and Legal provisions

- **Article 47** of the Indian Constitution says State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.
- India is a signatory to the three UN Conventions namely, **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 and Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.**
- Article 38 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 and Article 20 of the Convention on

❖ National Policy on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS), 2012

- It serves as a guide to various Ministries/Departments, State Governments, International Organisations, NGOs, etc

❖ National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India

- The first survey was conducted by MoSJE through National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi during 2018.
- As per the report, **Alcohol is the most common**

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Psychotropic Substances, 1971 obligates countries for taking all practicable measures for the prevention of abuse of drugs/psychotropic substances and after-care, rehabilitation and social reintegration of the persons involved.

➤ **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in the year 1985** to make stringent provisions for the control and regulation of operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

psychoactive substance used by Indians followed by Cannabis and Opioids.

➤ More than **5.7 Crore individuals** are affected by harmful or **dependent alcohol use** and need help for their alcohol use problems, about **25 lakh** suffer from **cannabis dependence** and approximately **77 lakh** individuals are estimated to need help for their **opioid use problems.**

❖ **NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION (2018-2023)**

➤ Aims at reduction of adverse consequences of drug abuse through a **multi-pronged strategy** involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families.

News in Between the Lines

Tiangong Space Station



❖ **Context**

➤ China, which is growing its presence in space, **complained to the UN detailing two alleged space incidents involving its Tiangong Space Station and two Starlink satellites** from Elon Musk-founded aerospace firm, SpaceX.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- Both the **U.S. and China are parties to the Outer Space Treaty**, which is formally known as the 'Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies'.
- The multilateral treaty, adopted by the UN General Assembly, **provides the basic framework on international space law.**

❖ **About Tiangong Space Station**

- The new multi-module Tiangong station is set to be **operational for at least 10 years.**
- Tianhe is one of three main components of what would be **China's first self developed space station**, rivalling the only other station in service – the ISS.
- The space station will operate in **low-Earth orbit at an altitude of 340-450 km** above Earth's surface.

Sahitya Akademi



❖ **Context**

➤ Recently, The **Sahitya Akademi announced its awards for 2021** for literary works in **20 languages**, including novels in Assamese and English by Anuradha Sarma Pujari and Namita Gokhale respectively.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- **Ms. Gokhale was awarded for her novel Things to Leave Behind** and **Ms. Pujari for lyat Ekhan Aaronya Asil.**
- **Literary critic D.S. Nagabhushan has been awarded the Kendra Sahitya Akademi award for 2021** for his work **Gandhi Kathana, biography of Mahatma Gandhi**

❖ **About Sahitya Akademi**

- Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, was **established in 1954 by the Government of India.**
- As India's Premier literary institution, the Akademi preserves and promotes literature contained in twenty four Indian Languages recognized by it through Awards, Fellowships, Grants, Publications, Literary Programmes, Workshops and Exhibitions.
- The Akademi also **undertakes literary exchange programmes with various countries** across the globe to promote Indian literature beyond the shores of India.
- Award is presented to the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the **twenty-four major Indian languages recognized by the Akademi** (including English). The **author must be of Indian Nationality.**

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Quantum Entangled Animal



❖ Context

- Scientists have identified **Frozen Tardigrade** as the first 'quantum entangled' animal in history in a recent study.

❖ Key Highlights

- Frozen tardigrade are **microscopic multicellular organisms** known to **tolerate extreme physiochemical conditions** through a latent state of life known as cryptobiosis.

❖ About Cryptobiosis

- Cryptobiosis or anabiosis is a **metabolic state of life entered by an organism in response to adverse environmental conditions** such as desiccation, freezing, and oxygen deficiency
- In this state, all measurable **metabolic processes stop**, preventing reproduction, development, and repair.
- When **environmental conditions return** to being hospitable, the **organism will return to its metabolic state of life** as it was prior to the cryptobiosis.

❖ About Quantum Entanglement

- Quantum entanglement is a **quantum mechanical phenomenon** in which the quantum states of **two or more objects have to be described with reference to each other**, even though the individual objects may be spatially separated.
- This leads to **correlations between observable physical properties** of the systems.
- Albert **Einstein dismissed this idea as a 'spooky action'**.

Inverted Duty structure



❖ Context

- GST council has decided to defer its decision to increase the GST rate from 5% to 12% on textiles amid concerns raised by the stakeholders

❖ Key highlights

- **Inverted duty structure is a situation when tax on raw materials is more than that on finished products**
- Government had sought to correct this situation by raising the duty on textiles and footwears (with sale value upto Rs. 1,000) from 5% to 12% wef 01 Jan 2022
- Textile association had voiced concerns that the move would cause shutdown of 1 lakh units and loss of 15 lakh jobs as the industry is already struggling with the high input prices
- However, the hike in duty in respect of footwears is likely to stay
- **GST council has been created** in line with the principle of **cooperative federalism under Article 279A of the Constitution introduced vide 101st Constitution Amendment 2016**
- **Union Finance minister** is the **Chairperson**, Union Minister -in-charge of Revenue and Minister in-charge of finance or any other minister nominated by the State Government are the members
- In order to take a decision, **3/4th majority of council members is needed**