

Election of Speaker

❖ Context

- Recently, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari 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.

Face to Face Centres

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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 founded uranium concentration higher than WHO permissible limits in 73 villages of **eastern Karnataka's** Tumkur, Chitradurga districts, Kolar and Chikballapur 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.

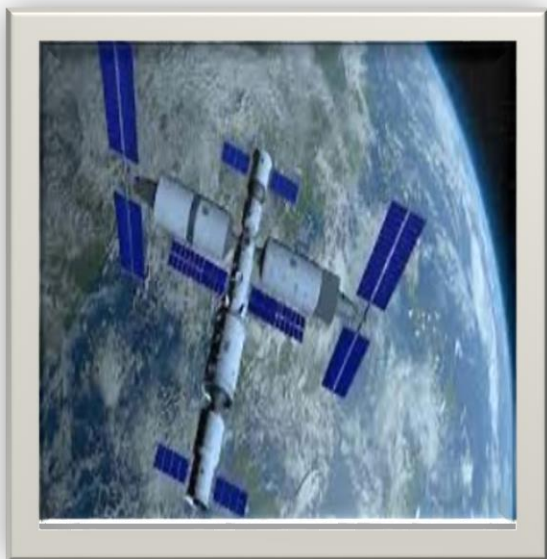
➤ More than **5.7 Crore individuals** are affected by harmful or **dependent alcohol use** and need help for their alcohol use problems, about **25 lakh** suffer from **cannabis dependence** and approximately **77 lakh** individuals are estimated to need help for their **opioid use problems**.

❖ **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**

