

FINDER DEVICE

NASA has developed a technology that can remotely detect the tiniest motions of the body that will be used by disaster relief teams in earthquake-stricken Turkey.



About FINDER device:

- The devices, called FINDERS(**Finding Individuals for Disaster Emergency Response**), use microwave radar sensors to find survivors underneath the rubble.
- It was designed to detect a human heartbeat buried beneath 30 feet of rubble.
- The radar illuminates the rubble pile and receives reflections back from a disaster site, including the victim.
- FINDER looks for changes in the reflection that indicate movement and then checks to see if those movements can be attributed to **human heartbeats and respirations**.
- It can distinguish human respiration from animals or mechanical movements.

SURAJ DRONES

Recently, Garuda Aerospace displayed the solar-powered drone SURAJ at Aero India 2023.



About SURAJ Drones:

- It is a **solar-powered**, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) high-altitude drone which can fly at an altitude of 3,000 ft.
- It is designed specifically for **surveillance operations**, providing real-time information to the high command, and protecting jawans on the ground.
- It will have ISR capability with **Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and a bionic chip** for advanced real-time processing.

- The drone would carry a payload of high-resolution zoom cameras with thermal imagery and foliage-penetrating lidar sensors with a maximum capacity of 10 kg.
- It is capable of capturing, processing, and transmitting photos and videos in real time.
- It is all set to support the Indian Army, Navy, Airforce, BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, DRDO, MOD, and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

USTAD BISMILLAH KHAN YUVA PURASKAR

Recently, the Union Minister for Culture presented the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (UBKYP) at Meghdoot Theatre Complex, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi.



About Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva puraskar:

- The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar, given to **artists up to the age of 40 years**, was introduced in the year 2006.
- It is presented **annually** to artists who have demonstrated conspicuous talent in the fields of **music, dance and drama**.
- The award is presented by Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- It carries award money of Rs 25,000/- an Angavastram and a plaque.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Minister of Culture.

Who was Ustad Bismillah Khan?

- He was a famous Shehnai musician.
- It was Ustad ‘Bismillah’ Khan who also played at the first Republic Day celebration in 1950.
- Bismillah Khan was the first Indian to be invited to perform at the prestigious Lincoln Centre Hall in the United States of America.

Key facts about the Sangeet Natak Akademi

- Sangeet Natak Akademi is India’s national academy of music, dance and drama.
- It was created by a resolution of the Ministry of Education, with Dr P.V. Rajamannar as its first Chairman.
- Presently it is an **Autonomous Body of the Ministry of Culture** and is fully funded by the Government for the implementation of its schemes and programmes.

WHAT ARE NEFT AND RTGS?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently made changes in NEFT and RTGS systems for Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) related transactions.



About NEFT:

- NEFT, which stands for **National Electronic Funds Transfer**, is an **electronic method of transferring money online**.
- Most Indian **banks provide the NEFT feature on internet banking and mobile banking**.
- It enables **transferring funds from the account maintained with any bank to any other bank branch**, provided the transaction is attempted between the banks that participate in the NEFT payment system.
- **Transactions made through NEFT do not take place in real-time**.
- As per **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines**, the payments made via NEFT are processed and settled **half hourly batches**.
- NEFT transactions **can be performed 24*7**.
- **Minimum Transfer Value: Rs. 1**
- **Maximum transfer value: No limit**
- Money transfer made through NEFT **does not require any additional transaction costs**.

About RTGS:

- RTGS, which stands for **Real-time Gross Settlement**, is a payment mode where the **money is transferred from one bank account to the other in real-time, without any delay**.
- It is mostly **used for transactions of high value**.
- When using the banking method, **RTGS is the fastest possible way to transfer money**.
- **Transactions made through RTGS are processed on a one-to-one basis**.
- RTGS transactions **can be performed 24*7**.
- **Minimum Transfer Value: Rs. 2 lakh**
- **Maximum transfer value: No upper limit is there, but however can vary between banks**.

SHINKU LA TUNNEL

The Union Cabinet recently gave its nod for the construction of the Shinku La tunnel to provide all-weather connectivity to the border areas of Ladakh.



About Shinku La tunnel:

- It will be constructed at an altitude of over 16,500 feet on the Nimu-Padam-Darcha road link on the border between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.
- The length of the tunnel will be 4.1 km.
- The Border Roads Organization (BRO) will construct the tunnel at a cost of Rs. 1,681.5 crores.
- The traffic movement in the tunnel will not be vulnerable to long-range artillery shelling or missile firings either by China or Pakistan.
- **Purpose:**
 - To provide all-weather connectivity to the border areas of Ladakh.
 - To enable swift movement of troops and heavy weaponry to forward areas.

SPECIAL MARRIAGE ACT

Why in news?

- Recently, a Bollywood actress chose to marry under the provisions of the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

What is the Special Marriage Act?

- The Special Marriage Act of 1954 (SMA) was passed by the Parliament in October, 1954.
- It governs a civil marriage where the state sanctions the marriage rather than the religion.
- Issues of personal law such as marriage, divorce, adoption are governed by religious laws that are codified.
- These laws, such as the **Muslim Marriage Act, 1954**, and the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, require either spouse to convert to the religion of the other before marriage.
- In the Indian system, both civil and religious marriages are recognised.

- However, the SMA enables marriage between inter-faith or inter-caste couples without them giving up their religious identity or resorting to conversion.

Who can get married under the Special Marriage Act?

- The applicability of the Act extends to the people of all faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, and Buddhists, across India.
- The minimum age to get married under the SMA is 21 years for males and 18 years for females.
- However, once married as per the secular law, under Section 19 of the Act, any member of an undivided family who professes the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion shall be deemed to effect their severance (ending a connection) from the family.
- This would affect rights, including the right to inheritance, of the persons choosing to marry under the SMA.

What is the procedure for a civil marriage?

- As per Section 5 of the Act, the parties to the marriage are required to give a notice, in writing, to a “Marriage Officer” of the district.
- Before the marriage is solemnized, the parties and three witnesses are required to sign a declaration form before the Marriage Officer.
- Once the declaration is accepted, the parties will be given a “Certificate of marriage” which is essentially proof of the marriage.

What is the “notice period” under the SMA?

- As per Section 6, a true copy of the notice given by the parties will be kept under the Marriage Notice Book.
- Upon receiving the notice, the marriage officer shall publish it in some conspicuous place in his office to invite any objections to the marriage within 30 days.
- Section 7 deals with Objection to marriage. It allows any person before the expiration of thirty days from the date of the notice’s publication to object to the marriage.
 - Various grounds of objection are specified in Section 4 of the Act.
- If an objection has been made, the Marriage Officer cannot solemnize the marriage until he has inquired into the matter of the objection.

What are the criticisms of SMA?

- The provisions related to the practice of posting the notice are often criticised as they are commonly invoked to harass consenting couples.
 - The unwarranted disclosure of matrimonial plans by two adults entitled to solemnize it may, in certain situations, jeopardize the marriage itself.
 - In certain instances, it may even endanger the life or limb of the party due to parental interference.
 - In January 2021, the Allahabad High Court ruled that couples seeking to solemnize their marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 can choose not to publish the mandatory 30-day notice of their intention to marry.
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[PANGOLINS: OVER 1,000 POACHED AND TRAFFICKED IN INDIA BETWEEN 2018 AND 2022](#)

Why in News?

- On the eve of World Pangolin Day (Feb 18), a not-for-profit organisation - TRAFFIC, has reported that 1,203 pangolins have been found in illegal wildlife trade in India from 2018 to 2022.
- An earlier analysis of illegal pangolin trade in India by TRAFFIC in 2018 reported poaching of nearly 6,000 pangolins between 2009 and 2017.

What is TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce)?

- Also known as the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network, TRAFFIC is a global non-governmental organisation monitoring the trade in wild animals and plants with focus on biodiversity and sustainable development.
- It was originally created in **1976** as a specialist group of the Species Survival Commission of the IUCN and evolved into a strategic alliance of the WWF and the IUCN.

- It also provides trade information and expert analysis to the decision-making process at CITES (such as through the Elephant Trade Information System) to ensure that international trade in wildlife remains at sustainable levels.

What Exactly is an Indian Pangolin?

- Also called thick-tailed pangolin and scaly anteater, it is a pangolin **native to the Indian subcontinent**.
- Like other pangolins, it has large-overlapping scales (colour varies depending on the colour of the earth in its surroundings) on its body **which act as armour**.
- An insectivore, it can also **curl itself into a ball as self-defence against predators** such as the tiger.
- It is nocturnal and found in various types of tropical forests as well as open land, grasslands and degraded habitats, including in close proximity to villages.
- The species can adapt well to modified habitats, provided its ant and termite prey remains abundant.
- Indian Pangolin is widely distributed in India, except the arid region, high Himalayas and the North-East.



- It can be found at an elevation up to 2500 m and also occurs in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- Other than regulating the population of insects, the pangolin is an **‘ecosystem engineer’** that builds burrows that help circulate soil organic matter, increase soil moisture and aeration, and affect plant community succession.
- It is threatened by **hunting for its meat**, traditional **medicine** and **illicit international trade**.

EC recognises Shinde faction as real Shiv Sena

Why in news?

- The Election Commission decided that the Shiv Sena faction led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was the real Shiv Sena as opposed to the group led by former CM Uddhav Thackeray.
- It said the party name and symbol of ‘Bow and Arrow’ would be retained by the Shinde group.

Fight for symbol when party splits

- When a prominent party splits, a tussle often ensues for its election symbol. This symbol is frequently considered as the embodiment of the identity of the party.
- **Examples:** In October 2021, the ECI had frozen the ‘Bungalow’ election symbol of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP). The LJP had split in June 2021.
 - Before that, tussles over the election symbol had been witnessed in 2017 after the Samajwadi Party (Cycle) and the AIADMK (Two leaves) split.

How does the ECI decide who gets the symbol?

- It is decided as per the provisions of the **Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**. This rule applies to disputes in recognised national and state parties.
 - Para 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968 empowers EC to decide on the claim of rival factions in case of split.
 - EC decides on the issue after taking into account all the available facts and circumstances of the case and hearing their representatives.
- The decision of the Commission shall be binding on all such rival sections or groups.
- For splits in **registered but unrecognised parties**, the ECI usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.

Is there a way other than the test of majority to resolve a symbol dispute?

- In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions.
- Whenever the EC could not test the strength of rival groups based on support within the party organisation (because of disputes regarding the list of office bearers), it fell back on testing the majority only among elected MPs and MLAs.

- Only in the case of the split in the AIADMK in 1987, which happened after the death of M G Ramachandran, the EC was faced with a peculiar situation.
- The group led by MGR's wife Janaki had the support of the majority of MPs and MLAs, while J Jayalalithaa was supported by a substantial majority in the party organisation.
- But before the EC was forced to make a decision on which group should retain the party symbol, a rapprochement was reached.

What happens to the group that doesn't get the parent party's symbol?

- Before 1997, EC used to recognise the party, not getting the symbol, based on the criteria fixed for recognition of parties under Paras 6 and 7 of the Symbols Order.
- i.e., if the breakaway party had support of sufficient MPs/MLAs as per the criteria, it was recognised by EC as National/State Party.
- The **EC in 1997 felt that merely having MPs and MLAs is not enough**, as the elected representatives had fought and won polls on tickets of their parent (undivided) parties.
- The EC introduced a **new rule** under which the splinter group of the party — other than the group that got the party symbol — **had to register itself as a separate party**.
- These parties could lay claim to national or state party status only on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration.

News Summary

- Eknath Shinde's claim on the party's name and bow-and-arrow symbol has been cleared by the Election Commission.
- The EC ruling comes at a time when the Supreme Court is still to decide on the dispute over the powers of the Deputy Speaker to disqualify rebel Shiv Sena MLAs when a notice for his own removal has been given.

How EC decided on the real Sena?

- **EC analysed three tests mentioned in the Sadiq Ali case, 1972**
- The three tests were:
 - Test of Aims and Objects of the Party
 - Test of Party Constitution, and

- Test of Majority
 - **EC held that the Test of Party Constitution for determining the present dispute case will be undemocratic**
 - While refusing to apply this test, EC held the 2018 changes to the Shiv Sena party constitution as undemocratic since the party has not submitted an amended copy of its constitution.
 - EC was of the view that if such test is applied in the present case, it would be catalytic in spreading such practices across parties.
 - **Majority in organisational party structure was inconclusive**
 - The details of organisational structure were not mentioned by any of the faction.
 - Hence, proving the test of majority in organisational party structure was inconclusive.
 - **EC used the test of majority in the legislative wing of the party**
 - Since, the test of majority in organisational party structure was inconclusive, EC had to resort to the test of majority in the legislative wing of the party.
 - This test showed qualitative superiority to the Shinde faction which has support of 40 out of 67 Sena MLAs & MLC and 13 out of 22 Sena MPs.
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