



News Analysis (19 Dec, 2019)

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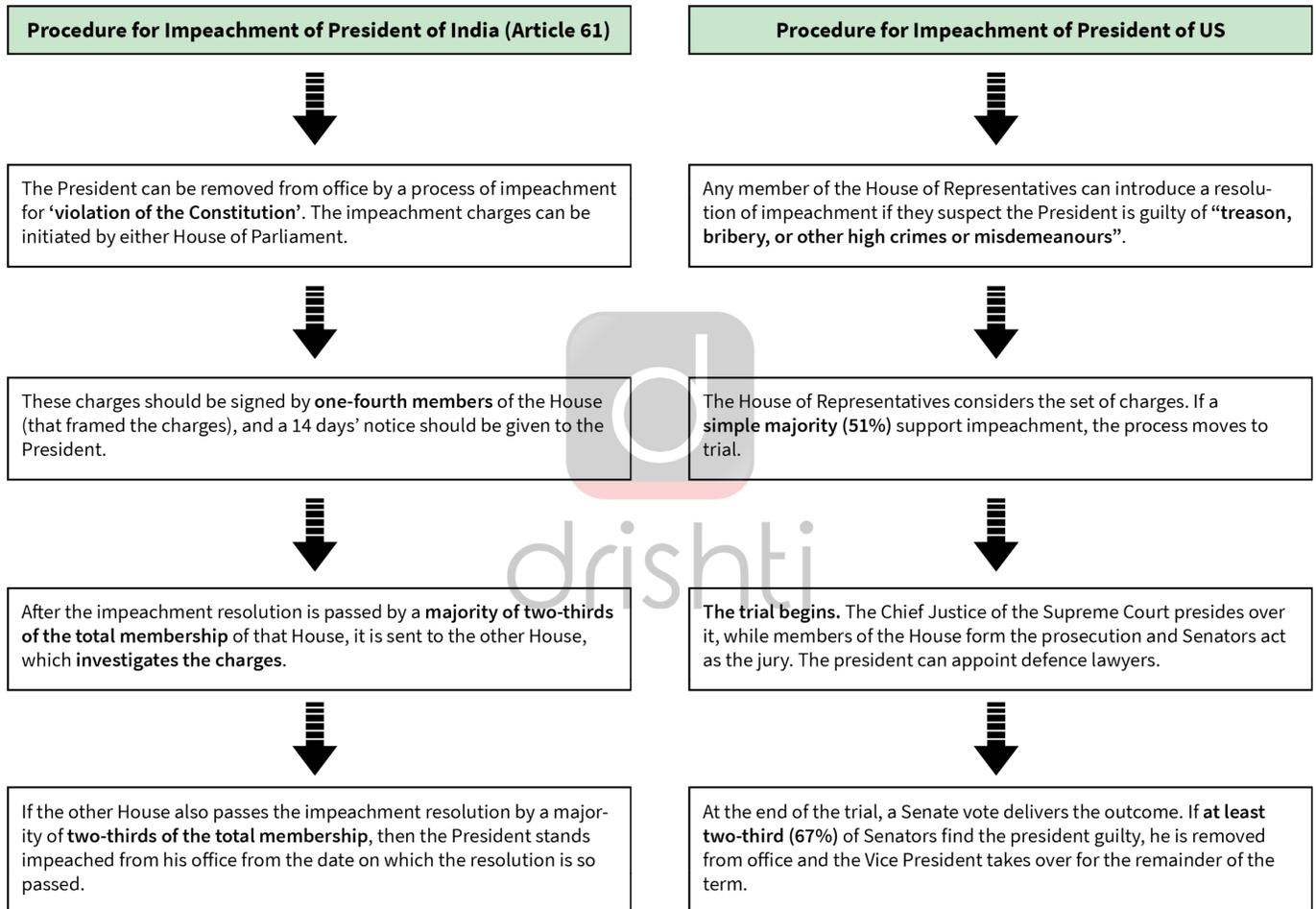
Impeachment of US President

Why in News

Donald Trump has become the third US President in history to be impeached by the House of Representatives. The trial will now start in the Senate.

- The two prior impeachments were: Andrew Johnson (1868) and Bill Clinton (1998).
- The legislature of the United States of America i.e. **Congress of the United States** consists of two houses: the Senate, in which each state, regardless of its size, is represented by two senators, and the House of Representatives, to which members are elected on the basis of population.
- The US Constitution states that the President can be removed for conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes or misdemeanour".

In India, the President can be removed only for 'violation of the Constitution' and the Constitution does not define the meaning of the phrase 'violation of the Constitution'.



Source: ToI

GST Council Meet

Why in News

Recently, **GST Council** held its **38th meeting** with a first time **vote on a proposal to tax all lotteries at the uniform rate of 28%**.

The vote went in favour (**21 states voted for and 7 states voted against**) of the proposal and a uniform tax rate will come into **effect from March 1, 2020**.

Key Points

- At present, there is a dual rate regime for lotteries, with **state-run lotteries taxed at 12%**, while **state-authorized lotteries** (run by **private players**) face a **28% tax rate**.
- The Council also **decided to waive the late fee for GSTR-1 (monthly return that summarizes all sales/outward supplies of a taxpayer) taxpayers** who have not filed returns from July 2017 to November 2019 if all the returns are filed by January 10, 2020.
If this deadline is missed, then e-way bills will be blocked for defaulters.
- In **Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern states, tax filing deadline** for November has been **extended** to the end of the year keeping in mind the situation.

- To **facilitate the setting up industrial parks**, the Council has decided that all entities with **20% ownership** by **central or state governments** will be exempt from GST payable for long-term land leases from January 1, 2020.
Earlier, only entities with a **50%** government stake were exempt.
- It also imposed a **uniform tax rate of 18%** on **woven and non-woven bags** from **January 1, 2020**.

GST Council

- It is a **constitutional body** under **Article 279A**. It makes recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to **Goods and Service Tax** and was introduced by the **Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016**.
- The GST Council is **chaired by the Union Finance Minister** and other members are the Union State Minister of Revenue or Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance or Taxation of all the States.
- It is considered as a federal body where both the centre and the states get due representation.
- Every decision of the Goods and Services Tax Council shall be taken at a meeting by a **majority of not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting**, in accordance with the following principles, namely:
 - the vote of the Central Government shall have a weightage of one third of the total votes cast, and
 - the votes of all the State Governments taken together shall have a weightage of two-thirds of the total votes cast, in that meeting.
- **Economic Survey 2017-18** also hailed the GST Council for its **cooperative federalism technology** which brings together the Center and States and can be applied to many other policy reforms.

Source: TH

EVMs Not Under RTI Act

Why in News

Recently, the Delhi High Court **quashed** an order of the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** which **had held** that **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** fall within the definition of 'information' under the **Right To Information (RTI) Act**.

- The CIC's order had come on a plea which sought **access to an EVM maintained by the Election Commission (EC)** under the RTI Act.
- CIC had observed that EVMs available with the EC in a **material form or as a sample** is a **piece of information** under **section 2(f) of the RTI Act**.
Section- 2 (f) states that "Information" means any material in any form, including Records, Documents, Memos, e-mails, Opinions, Advice, Press releases, Circulars, Orders, Logbooks, Contracts, Reports, Papers, **Samples, Models**, Data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a Public Authority under any other law for the time being in force.
- With this judgement, **EVMs are out of the purview of RTI ACT**.

Election Commission's Stand

- **EC does not maintain any EVM in sample or model form for the purpose of Section 2(f) of the RTI Act.**

Though it maintains a small number of EVMs for the purposes of **training of election officials** and uses in **awareness programmes** under strict supervision.

- All EVMs utilised in the conduct of elections are **securely stored** in **accordance** with the manual on **EVMs issued by the EC and the Representation of People Act.**
- As per **Article 324 of the Constitution**, ECI has plenary powers in matters related to conduct of elections. And **EVMs are integral to the conduct of elections** in India. Its unregulated disclosure may lead to the **threat to the purity and fairness of elections.**

Source: TH

Macau to Celebrate 20th Anniversary



Macau celebrated the **20th Anniversary** since the **former Portuguese colony was returned to China.**

- The Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) is an **integral part of China** and example of China's **"one country, two systems" model.**
"One country, two systems" is a constitutional principle describing the governance of Hong Kong and Macau since they became regions of China in 1997 and 1999, respectively.
- **Administration:** It **does not practice** China's socialist economic system. Also, it enjoys a **high degree of autonomy** in all matters **except foreign and defence affairs.**
- **Location:** It is situated on the south-east coast of China near the mouth of the **Pearl River.** It is 60 kilometres from Hong Kong.
Macau consists of the **Macau peninsula** and the **two islands of Taipa and Coloane.**
- **Population:** It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world.
- **Economy:** Macau is heavily dependent on the **gambling industry with its casinos** contributing about 80% of government income.

Source: TOI

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2019

Why in News

Recently, Sahitya Akademi has announced its **annual Sahitya Akademi Awards** in **23 languages**.

The awardees will receive an **engraved copper-plaque**, a shawl and an amount of **Rs. 1 lakh**.

Indian film-maker Satyajit Ray is the **designer of the plaque** awarded by the Sahitya Akademi.

Sahitya Akademi Awards

- Sahitya Akademi award established in **1954**, is a literary honour that is conferred **annually** by Sahitya Akademi, **India's National Academy of letters**.
- Award is presented to the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the **23 major Indian languages recognized by the Akademi (including English)**.
- Sahitya Akademi award is the **second-highest literary honour** by the Government of India, **after Jananpith award**.
- **Criteria:**
 - The author must be of **Indian Nationality**.
 - Book/work eligible for the award must be an outstanding contribution to the language and literature to which it belongs.
 - When equal merit for books of two or more are found, certain criteria like total literary contribution and standing of authors shall be taken into consideration for declaring award.

Source: PIB

India-Bangladesh Joint Water Commission

Why in News

The **India-Bangladesh** Joint Rivers Commission's (JRC) technical-level talks have been cancelled recently.

- The JRC was expected to draft the framework agreement of the interim sharing of the **Feni river's waters with Tripura**.
 - Bangladesh had agreed to share 1.82 cusecs of water with Tripura.
 - The Feni river forms part of the India-Bangladesh border. It originates in the South Tripura district and meets the Bay of Bengal after it flows into Bangladesh.
- The meeting cancellation is also expected to delay the preparation of a **draft framework for the interim sharing agreements regarding several other rivers like the Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gomati, Dharla and Dudhkumar**.

Indo-Bangladesh Joint Water Commission

- An Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) is functioning since **1972**.
- It was established to ensure the most effective joint efforts in maximizing the benefits of common river systems. India and Bangladesh share **54** rivers.
- The JRC is **headed by Water Resources Ministers of both the countries**.
- It also includes a **system of transmission of flood forecasting data** on major rivers like Ganga, Teesta, Brahmaputra and Barak during the monsoon season from India to Bangladesh.

Source: IE

Asian Houbara Bustard

Why in News

The government of Pakistan has issued special permits to the Emir of Qatar and nine other members of the royal family to hunt the Houbara Bustard, an internationally protected bird species.

Houbara Bustard

- Bustards are large, terrestrial birds that belong to several species, including some of the largest flying birds.
- **Two Distinct Species of Houbara Bustard:** The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognises two distinct species found in:
 - North Africa (*Chlamydotis undulata*) and
 - Asia (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*).



- **Habitat of Asian Houbara**

- The population of the Asian houbara bustards extends from northeast Asia, across central Asia, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula to reach the Sinai desert (Egypt).
- After breeding in the spring, the Asian bustards migrate south to spend the winter in Pakistan, the Arabian Peninsula and nearby Southwest Asia.
- **Reasons for Decline:** Poaching, unregulated hunting, along with degradation of its natural habitat.
- **IUCN Status-** Critically Endangered

Source: IE

Tripura Gets Its First SEZ

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has notified setting up of Tripura's first ever Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

It will be developed by **Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) Ltd.** for the industries based on rubber, textile and apparel, bamboo and agri-food processing.

Significance

The setting up of a SEZ will open up **new avenues to attract private investment** because of its **close proximity to the Chittagong Port (Bangladesh)**.

Special Economic Zone

- With a view to overcome the shortcomings experienced on account of the multiplicity of controls and clearances; absence of world-class infrastructure, and with a view to attract larger foreign investments in India, the **Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Act was passed in 2005**.
- SEZs work as an engine for economic growth supported by quality infrastructure complemented by an attractive fiscal package, both at the Centre and the State level, with the minimum possible regulations.

Source: PIB

Balimela Reservoir

Why in News

Recently, there has been demand for providing *patta* or documented land rights to the tribal inhabitants of 'Swabhimani Anchal', the erstwhile cut-off area of the **Balimela reservoir in Odisha**.

Balimela Reservoir

- The Balimela Reservoir is on the **river Sileru** which is situated in the Maikangiri District of **Odisha State**.
 - The **Sileru (also known as the Machkund River)** rises in the Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh state and flows northward into Jalaput Reservoir on the border with Odisha state.
 - The Sileru empties into the **Sabari River in Chhattisgarh**. Sabari river is a tributary of **Godavari**.
- The capacity of the Reservoir is 94,500 mcft. From this reservoir, 50% of water is diverted through a tunnel to Balimela Power House and the other 50% is let off in the river for utilization by Andhra Pradesh.

Source: TH

Kaleshwaram Project

Why in News

Telangana State government has requested the Centre to treat **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)** as a **National Project**.

National Projects are provided Central grant of **90% of the estimated cost** for their completion in a time bound manner.

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

- It was initiated in **2016** on the **Godavari River**.
- It is designed to irrigate 45 lakh acres for two crops in a year, meet the drinking water requirement of 70% of the state and also cater to the needs of the industry.
- The Centre under the **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014** is mandated to support programmes for the development of backward areas in the successor States, including expansion of physical and social infrastructure.
 - 9 out of 10 districts of Telangana (It had 10 districts when it separated. Now it has 33 districts) were covered under the **Backward Regions Grant Fund**.
 - To provide drinking water and restore irrigation tanks, **Mission Bhagiratha** and **Mission Kakatiya** were taken up respectively.

Backward Region Grant Fund

- It is a programme implemented by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** in 272 identified backward districts in all States of the country except Goa.
- It is designed to redress regional imbalances in development.
- It consists of two funding window namely **Development Grant** and **Capacity Building**.

Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014

- Also known as **Telangana Act**, it received the **President's assent on 01 March 2014**.
- It requires the State of Andhra Pradesh to initiate activities related to creation of successor states including the apportionment of assets, liabilities, employees, contracts etc. between the two successor states.

Source: TH

Onion Varieties

Why in News

The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has developed a '**Processing-grade White Onion (PWO-2)** variety for commercial cultivation by farmers from the 2020-21 rabi cropping season.

- Punjab's farmers now mainly grow red coloured varieties of onion, that is, PRO-6 and Punjab Naroya.
 - PRO-6 can be harvested in 120 days after transplanting and yielding 175 quintals per acre on an average.
 - Punjab Naroya can be harvested after 145 days and yields 150 quintals.
- The average yield of PWO-2 is 165 quintals per acre and it matures in roughly 140 days. Its **biggest advantage is that the bulbs are processable** and can be used to make dehydrated products such flakes, powder, rings and granules.
- The University in 1994 also released a **processing-grade white onion variety called Punjab White**. However, its average yield was only 135 quintals per acre and did not interest farmers.
- Punjab produces 2-2.1 lakh tonnes of onions, which meets hardly a third of the state's requirement. And given rising onion prices, there is probably need for varieties such as PWO - 2 whose bulbs can be converted and stored in processed form.

Source: IE
