

Indian Science Congress Postponed

Why In News

- **Indian Science Congress**, the largest gathering of scientists and students of science in the country and a permanent annual fixture in the calendar of the participant group for more than a century, has been postponed.



- The **five-day event** will not begin on its customary date, January 3. There is no firm word on when — and whether — the congress will meet this year.

Indian Science Congress

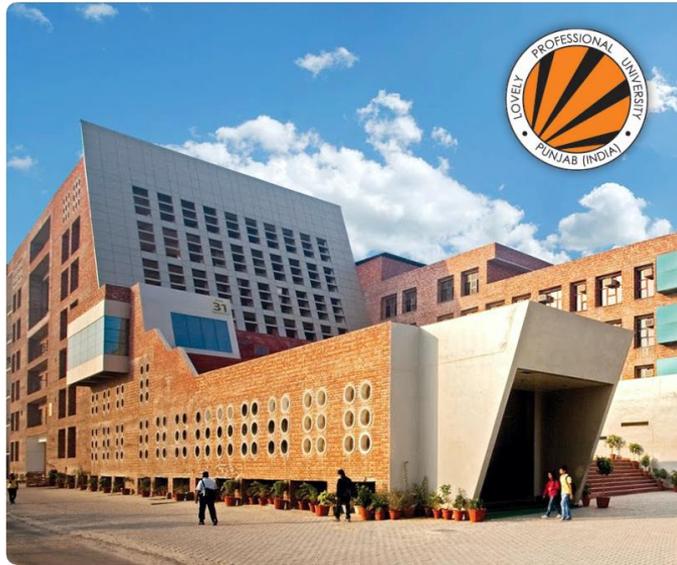
- The postponement is unprecedented. With the exception of the two years following the outbreak of the **Covid-19 pandemic— 2021 and 2022** — the Indian Science Congress has been held every year since 1914.

109th | ISC
Indian Science Congress

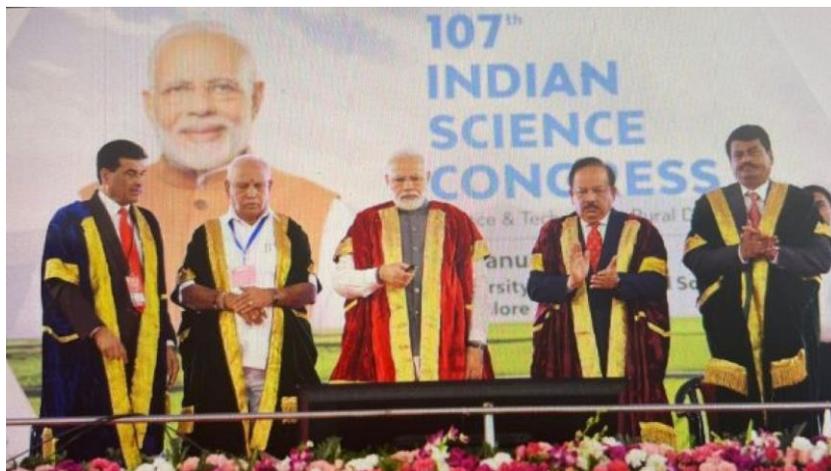
- The **108th edition of the Congress** was held in **Nagpur from January 3-7, 2023**.
- The Science Congress is a **one-of-its-kind event, which brings together** scientists and researchers from not just the country's premier institutions and laboratories, but also teachers of science from colleges and universities, and offers them a platform to interact with students and the general public on matters relating to science.
- The crisis is the fallout of an **unresolved disagreement between the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)**, a registered society that organises the event, and the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** in the Union Ministry of Science and Technology, the main funder of the congress.



- In September 2023, the **DST pulled funding support to the congress**, alleging “financial irregularities”. The ISCA denied the accusation, and challenged the DST’s directive that **government funds should not be spent** on anything related to the Science Congress, in court. This only deepened the rift. The lawsuit remains pending.
- The DST’s contribution (which was raised to **Rs 5 crore in 2023 from Rs 3 crore** earlier) pays for most of the event’s expenses.
- The ISCA also receives some funding from a few other government bodies, and raises some more from its members and by renting out space for exhibitions etc. during the event.
- The ISCA had decided to move this year’s congress **from the original venue, Lucknow University**, to the private **Lovely Professional University (LPU)** in Jalandhar in the hope of receiving some funding.



- While LPU had also hosted the **106th Science Congress in 2019**, the DST was said to be unhappy with the ISCA’s choice for this year.
- The ISCA, however, argued that its **executive committee does not need** the DST’s clearance for the venue, and that a DST representative was in any case present when LPU was chosen.
- The ISCA has now formed a five-member committee to scout for possible venues to host the event.
- **Ranjit Kumar Verma**, general secretary of ISCA, said it was unfortunate that the event was not being held on time, but said this was not the end of the Science Congress.



- “We will hopefully be able to organise the Science Congress before March 31 and we are hopeful that the Prime Minister will attend the event,” he said.

- “The Executive Committee of the Indian Science Congress Association met this evening and decided to put the **109th Congress on hold**. We have also decided to post an appeal on our website for universities keen to host the event,” **ISCA president Arvind Saxena**
- Amid this tussle, LPU last month withdrew its offer to host the event.

Scientific Community

- Once the flagship event where the who’s who of the **Indian scientific community** used to gather to talk about and discuss latest developments in science, the Science Congress had suffered a sharp decline in quality in the last couple of decades, leading to demands, from within the scientific community as well, to reform or disband it.
- With most leading scientists keeping away, the event had been **reduced to a gathering of mostly university and college** teachers with little scientific credentials or experience.

