

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 3
JUNE
2021

MAINS

GS-I

Chhatrapati Shivaji Coronation Day Anniversary

GS-I

Relevance of 'G-7 summit 2021' for India

GS-I

76th United Nations General Assembly elects its new President

GS-I

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021

GS-I

Conflict of Interest

PRELIMS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- India elected to UN Economic and Social Council for 2022-24 term

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- Model Tenancy Act
- SAGE initiative and portal

ECONOMY

- El Salvador's decision to use Bitcoin as legal tender
- NITI Aayog Releases SDG India Index and Dashboard 2020-21
- Sardar Sarovar Dam
- What the G7 corporate tax deal means for India

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- China's 'artificial sun'
- Discovery of new enzyme for cell stability
- New drug for Alzheimer's

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The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK- 3 (JUNE, 2021)

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SECTION: A

(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI CORONATION DAY ANNIVERSARY

CONTEXT

The Maharashtra community in India is celebrating 'Shivrajyabhishek' (June 6), a day when Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was crowned as king of Maratha Swaraj in 1674. The event proved to be the watershed moment in Maratha history as it also marked the beginning of Hindavi Swarajya in India.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The day is celebrated widely in Maharashtra, especially in Raigad where locals organise a coronation ceremony for Shivaji at Raigad Fort.
- This year's Shivrajyabhishek Ceremony will be graced by the presence of a rare coin 'Hoan' that is part of the antiques of Shivaji Maharaj's era.

nearly equidistant from Pune, Satara and Bombay, and hence it was ideally situated for directing military as well as maritime operations.

- Shivaji was formally crowned as the Chhatrapati (emperor) of his realm at Raigad on 6 June, 1674 for the first time and on September 24, 1674, for the second time.

◎ ANALYSIS

Early life of Shivaji

- The founder of the Maratha Empire, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was born in the Bhonsle Maratha clan to Shahaji and Jijabai on February 19, 1630, in the hill-fort of Shivneri which towers over the town of Junnar in the northern part of Pune district.
- On account of his military prowess and ambitious spirit, Chhatrapati Shivaji's father, Raje Shahaji Bhosle, became an important chief whose services were coveted by the Nizamshahs, the Adilshahs of Bijapur and the Mughals alike.
- In his early days Chhatrapati Shivaji set upon himself the task of first establishing a firm control over all parts of his father's jagir. For this, it was necessary to secure possession of the hill-forts within the jagir.
- Chhatrapati Shivaji first secured possession of Torna fort from its Bijapuri commandant through some stratagem.
- The ground fort of Chakan guarding the road to Pune from the north was secured by winning over the loyalty of its commandant while the hill-fort of Kondana (better known as Sinhagad) near Pune was secured by diplomatic moves.

Coronation at Raigad fort

- It was Vishweshwar alias Gaga Bhatta, one of the most venerable priests of his time, who urged Chhatrapati Shivaji to crown himself ceremonially
- Raigad, the impregnable fort in Kolaba district on the Konkan coast had already been chosen by Chhatrapati Shivaji to be his capital because it was

Why this event is historically significant?

- It is significant to know that on this day, Shivaji was given the title of 'Shakakarta'. He also took the title of Haindava Dharmodhhaarak (protector of the Hindu faith).
- Chhatrapati Shivaji started a new era (Rajyabhisheka Shaka) from the day of his coronation and struck new coins (Shivrai hans) in his own name.
- The institution of the council of eight ministers (Ashtapradhan) with different portfolios but acting under the supreme monarch was formalised.
- The coronation announced to the world that the political creation of Chhatrapati Shivaji was validated as the work of a sovereign, that he was no longer a jagirdar's son or a Mughal mansabdar in revolt.

Rule of Shivaji

- In Chhatrapati Shivaji's State, political power rested in the highest executive, the crowned prince though he appointed Ashta Pradhan (council of eight) to assist him.
- In Chhatrapati Shivaji's Council, no minister possessed overriding authority. This was left in the hands of the sovereign himself.

Designation/Title of Ashta Pradhan	
Pantpradhan / Peshwa (Prime Minister)	Sar-i-Naubat / Senapati (Commander-in-Chief)
Amatya / Mazumdar (Finance Minister)	Sumant / Dabir - (Foreign Minister)
Shurunavis/Sacheev (Secretary)	Nyayadhish (Chief Justice)

Waqia-Navis (Interior Minister)	Panditrao (High priest)
---------------------------------	-------------------------

- Chhatrapati Shivaji had two hundred and eighty forts in his occupation. The hill-fort, with the territory commanded by it, was the unit of Chhatrapati Shivaji's civil government.
- Coming down from the hill-forts to the plains, the country was divided into Mahals and Prants.
- Chhatrapati Shivaji did not continue the old Mughal system of leaving the revenue management solely in the hands of the village Patils or Kulkarnis, it was carried on directly by the Subhedars or Mahalkaris for the Subha or the Mahal while every group of two or three villages was managed by a Kamavisdar who made the direct collection of the revenue.
- His reign brought peace and order to his country, assured the protection of women's honour and the religion of all sects without distinction, extended the royal patronage to the truly pious men of all creeds, and presented equal opportunities to all his subjects by opening the public service to the talented irrespective of caste or creed.

Shivaji's warfare strategy

Chhatrapati Shivaji adopted the Guerrilla war strategy. The Guerrilla strategy aims at avoiding pitched battles. It strives to change the balance of military force by tactful operations. It knows no distinction between the offensive and defensive. Its strategy is always offensive. The descriptive label attached to such war was Ghanimi Kava

Shivaji's Naval Power

- The marine forts of Chhatrapati Shivaji were mainly of two types. The first one was the island fort in which the stronghold was surrounded by sea on all sides.
- The other type was known as the coastal fort or the headland fort which was constructed along the sea-shore where the entrance would be from the land side and the rear part of the fort would face towards the sea.
- Shivaji also laid the foundation of the ship building industry of the Marathas after he captured Konkan in 1650s. Kalyan was made a naval base and dockyards were built accordingly.

Hindavi Swaraj

- Hindavi Swarajya (Self-rule of Indian people) is a term for socio-political movements seeking to remove foreign rule from India.
- The term was first used in a 1645 letter by Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- The term Swarajya was later adopted by Bal Gangadhar Tilak during freedom struggle.

CONCLUSION

Chhatrapati Shivaji's great achievement was to instill among his fellow countrymen a spirit of self-reliance and independence. The resolute passion of independence he kindled among the people, is the most precious legacy of his Swarajya to modern India.

RELEVANCE OF 'G-7 SUMMIT 2021' FOR INDIA

CONTEXT

This year's summit of the Group of Seven industrial countries hosted by the United Kingdom in the picturesque Cornwall region promises to be a definitive moment in the political evolution of the West.

The summit, which saw the digital participation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also marks an important step towards a new global compact between India and the West.

◎ BACKGROUND

- This year G-7 summit happening at a time when global economy is facing its worst crisis since the great depression of 1930 due to the global covid pandemic.
- Unlike last year when the scheduled summit in the USA had got cancelled due to coronavirus outbreak, this year summit is being conveyed physically which itself reflects a sense of hope.

◎ ANALYSIS

What is G7?

- The G7 (Group of Seven) is an organization of the world's seven largest so-called advanced economies.
- They are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the United States.
- Representatives from the European Union are usually present while India, South Korea and Australia have also been invited this year.
- The UK is holding the G7 presidency for 2021 so this is where the summit is taking place at the Carbis Bay Hotel near St Ives in Cornwall.
- Ahead of this year's summit, the G7 finance ministers agreed to make multinational companies pay more tax (minimum of 15%).

Key takeaways from this year summit

2021 summit is the first global tour of newly elected US president Joe Biden after assuming office.

- **Multilateralism:** US signaled **return of multilateralism** as the core theme of American foreign policy. Joe Biden "America is back" slogan signifies re-strengthening trans- Atlantic alliance with members of G-7 like U.K, France, Germany and Italy.
- **New Atlantic Charter:** President Biden and PM Boris Johnson signed the "New Atlantic Charter" which updates the previous war time charter signed between their predecessors Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill.

- Unlike the previous charter which is directed against Nazism of Hitler's Germany this charter address 21st century challenges like climate change, bio-diversity, AI, cyber operations etc.
- **B3W initiative:** Rise of China and its growing competition with west dominates this year G7 summit. "BUILD BACK BETTER WORLD" B3W initiative is launched to support infrastructure investment in low- and middle-income countries is seen as a counter to **China's belt and road initiative** which is accused by western countries of promoting predatory financing.
- **Global taxation:** Another key theme of this year summit is to make globalization more functional through steps like proposing a minimum 15% tax on multinational corporations and commitment by G7 countries to make available 1 billion doses of Covid vaccines.
- **Carbis Bay Declaration:** Another key initiative is "CARBIS BAY DECLARATION" which aims at tackling future pandemic within 100 days thus signifies importance of public health in current geopolitical scenario.

G7 history

- As the world reeled from the first oil shock and subsequent financial crisis, the heads of state and government of the six leading industrial countries met in 1975 at the Chateau de Rambouillet, France, for the first time to discuss the global economy.
- They were joined in 1976 by Canada and in 1998 by Russia.
- Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, the G7 nations decided in March 2014 to meet without Russia until further notice.

India's stake in this year G7 summit

- India has been invited as special guest at 2021 G7 summit along with South Africa, Australia and South Korea. This invitation comes at a time when India relation with China is under severe strain due to last year Galwan incident and subsequent military standoff at LAC.

- In March this year India also participated in QUAD leader's Summit. Both this development signifies a growing convergence among India and West to counter balance China.
- Further, this year invitation is also a continuation of India long term desire of becoming part of global high table of diplomacy.
- Commitment of USA to provide 500 million covid vaccine without any strings attached also come as a breather to countries like India who are emerging from deadly second wave of covid and grappling with acute shortage of vaccines.
- Signing of new Atlantic charter is a key stepping stone in India interaction with the west since during signing of last charter Britain PM Churchill specifically excluded Indians from the principles of self determination which form the core of previous charter.
 - This had poisoned India's relation with west in its initial years and cast a long shadow of mistrust in years to come.
- New Atlantic charter deals with challenges like climate change, biodiversity, rise of authoritarianism in which India is a key stakeholder thus can hold the promise of heralding a new chapter in India relationship with the west.

Challenges

- **Expected conflicts of interest:** The growing convergence of interests between India and the West does not mean the two sides will agree on everything as there are many areas of continuing divergence from the economic role of the state to

the democratic regulation of social media and the technology giants, etc.

- **Difficult convergences:** The broad convergences between India and the West into tangible cooperation will not be easy. It would require sustained negotiations on:
 - converting shared interests
 - reforming the global economic order
 - mitigating climate change
 - promoting greener growth
 - making the world immune to future pandemics
 - constructing trusted supply chains, into concrete outcomes

◎ CONCLUSION

- As China is seemingly the greatest obstacle to India's global ambitions besides threat to the territorial sovereignty, a better relation with the West is a requirement for India.
- Looking east and mobilizing the south have been India's default geopolitical orientations. While Delhi continues to strengthen its partnerships in Asia and the global south, a more productive partnership with the West helps secure a growing array of India's national interests and adds a new depth to India's international relations.
- In this scenario, G7 summit and invitation to India is a welcome development. G-7 summit is an opportunity to expand the global dimension of India's growing partnerships with the US and the West.

76th UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTS ITS NEW PRESIDENT

CONTEXT

Maldives Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid has been elected president of the 76th UNGA with an overwhelming majority. He received 143 votes out of 191 ballots cast, while Afghanistan's former Foreign minister Zalmay Rassoul got 48 votes.

◎ BACKGROUND

- Maldives had announced Shahid's candidature in December 2018, at a time no other candidate was in the fray.
- India announced its support for Shahid during Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's visit to Maldives in November 2020. He was the only candidate even then.
- While Rassoul also had strong credentials, by the time his candidature was announced, Maldives had already garnered extensive support. Moreover, it has never held the office of PGA, while Afghanistan held the post during the 21st GA session in 1966-67.

► Replacement of the President (Rule 34):

If the President is unable to perform his functions, a new President shall be elected for the unexpired term.

General Powers of the President

- Declare the opening and closing of each plenary meeting of the session
- Direct the discussions in plenary meeting, ensure observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions and announce decisions.
- He shall rule on points of order and, subject to these rules, shall have complete control of the proceedings at any meeting and over the maintenance of order thereat.
- The President may, in the course of the discussion of an item, propose to the General Assembly the limitation of the time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate.
- He may also propose the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting or the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion
- The President, in the exercise of his functions, remains under the authority of the General Assembly.
- The President, or a Vice-President acting as President, shall not vote but shall designate another member of his delegation to vote in his place.

◎ ANALYSIS

Procedure of Election of President

- The Presidency of the General Assembly rotates among the five regional groups – the Group of Asian States, the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States, the Group of African States, the Western European and other States Group.
- The President of the General Assembly is elected every year by a secret ballot and requires a simple majority vote of the General Assembly
- In accordance with **UNGA's** 'Rules of Procedure', the President and Vice-Presidents are elected
 - **Elections (Rule 30):** General Assembly elects a President and twenty-one Vice-Presidents at 9 least three months before the opening of the session over which they are to preside.
 - **Temporary President (Rule 31):** If, at the opening of a session of the General Assembly, the President for that session has not yet been elected, the President of the previous session shall preside until the Assembly has elected a President
 - **Acting President (Rule 32):** If the President finds it necessary to be absent during a meeting or any part thereof, he shall designate one of the Vice-Presidents to take his place.

Proposed reforms

- With the increased importance and expectations regarding the performance of the Office, it is no longer tenable that the President should rotate automatically every year between the regional groups.
- The selection of the President should be based on a competitive process open to all UN Member States, similar to the Secretary-General
- The President's term in office should be extended from one to two years. This would ensure that the effectiveness, professionalism and diplomatic support that Member States have come to expect

from the presidency is maintained

- As an alternative, Presidents could be appointed one year in advance and serve as Deputy President for one year under the current President, before taking office.
- Even if the President's term in office is not extended, the staff should still be retained for longer periods, since this would improve the service and support enjoyed both by the President and the Member States.

Functions and powers of United Nations General Assembly

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament
- Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it

- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations
- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields
- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries
- Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs

◎ CONCLUSION

Over the last ten to fifteen years the political role of the General Assembly and its President has undergone a gradual and incremental enhancement. This has occurred in part because of the frustration of many Member States at the lack of reform of the Security Council. At the same time, it has become increasingly possible for small- and medium-sized countries to show leadership in the negotiations and in leading the coalitions that spearhead change and get to results. Hence the proposed reforms in such multilateral institutions are the need of the hour.

THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES AND DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE) RULES 2021

CONTEXT

The Delhi High Court has recently granted Twitter three weeks' time to state on record that it has appointed a resident grievance officer and observed that it has to comply with the IT Rules, 2021, if they have not been stayed.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The new Rules were notified in February this year by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the Information Technology Act, 2000. They will replace the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011.
- Social Media intermediaries were given a three-month period to comply with the new rules.
- The government in May issued fresh notice to all social media intermediaries seeking details on the status of compliance with the new rules that came into effect on that day.
- Companies like Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Koo, Sharechat, and LinkedIn have shared details with MeitY as per the requirement of the new norms.
- Twitter sought an extension of the compliance window and called for a constructive dialogue and a collaborative approach from the government to safeguard freedom of expression of the public.
- WhatsApp filed a case in the Delhi High Court against the government on grounds that the new rules violated customer privacy.
- The new Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code have also been challenged by entities like The Wire, LiveLaw and The Quint.

IT Act, 2000

- The Act provides a legal framework for electronic governance by giving recognition to electronic records and digital signatures.
- It also defines cybercrimes and prescribes penalties for them.
- The Act directed the formation of a Controller of Certifying Authorities to regulate the issuance of digital signatures.
- It established a Cyber Appellate Tribunal to resolve disputes arising from this new law.

- The Act amended various sections of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, the Banker's Book Evidence Act, 1891, and the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 to make them compliant with new technologies.

◎ ANALYSIS

What are IT Rules, 2021?

- The Rules aim to empower ordinary users of social media and OTT platforms with a mechanism for redressal and timely resolution of their grievance with the help of a Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO) who should be a resident in India.
- **Safety measures:** Special emphasis has been given on the protection of women and children from sexual offences, fake news and other misuse of the social media.
- **Source identification:** Identification of the "first originator of the information" would be required in case of an offence related to sovereignty and integrity of India.
- **Appointment of Chief Compliance Officer:** A Chief Compliance Officer, a resident of India, also needs to be appointed and that person shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act and Rules.
- **Complaint monitoring:** A monthly compliance report mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken on the complaints would be necessary.
- **Code of Ethics:** The OTT platforms, online news and digital media entities, on the other hand, would need to follow a **Code of Ethics**.
- **Self-classification:** OTT platforms would be called as 'publishers of online curated content' under the new rules.

- ▶ They would have to self-classify the content into five categories based on age and use parental locks for age above 13 or higher. They also need to include age verification mechanisms for content classified as 'Adult'.
- **Redressal mechanism:** A three-level grievance redressal mechanism has been mandated. This includes the appointment of a GRO, self-regulatory bodies registered with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) to look after the Code of Ethics and a Charter for the self-regulating bodies formulated by MIB.

Grounds for challenge

- While the new rules were challenged by many on grounds of **violation of free speech**, the government has clarified that these rules permit social media platforms to operate in India freely but with due accordance to the law.
- Every entity has to abide by the Constitution of the country and the Rule of Law.
- Also, as per **Article 19** of the Constitution, freedom of speech and expression is not absolute and is subject to reasonable restrictions, especially in case of a threat to national sovereignty and security.
- Failure to comply with any one of these requirements would take away the indemnity provided to social media intermediaries under **Section 79** of the Information Technology Act.

Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000

- It says any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted on its platform.
- This protection, the Act says, shall be applicable only if the intermediary acts just as the messenger carrying a message from point A to point B, without interfering in any manner. It will be safe from any legal prosecution brought upon due to the message being transmitted.
- The protection accorded under **Section 79**, however, is not granted if the intermediary, despite being informed or notified by the government or its agencies, does not immediately disables access to the material under question.
- The intermediary must not tamper with any evidence of these messages or content present on its platform, failing which it loses its protection under the Act.

- Like **Section 79 of India's IT Act**, **Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act** of the US states that "no provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider".

Need for the new Rules

The rules come at a time when the country is constantly striving to ensure the safety and sovereignty of the cyberspace and of personal data.

- **Wide coverage:** Social media is increasingly becoming an important part of our life.

For example, WhatsApp currently has a user base of 340 million in the country, accounting for the largest number of subscribers in the world, even more than the US. Facebook has 290 million, Twitter 17.5 million, YouTube 265 million and Instagram, 120 million.

- **Bundle of issues:** With such a huge population dependent on social media platforms, the tech-giants cannot ignore the new and emerging challenges like-
 - ▶ persistent spread of fake news
 - ▶ rampant abuse of the platforms to share morphed images of women
 - ▶ deep fakes and other contents that threaten the dignity of women
 - ▶ child pornography
 - ▶ threat to security
- **Hate speech:** Instances of use of abusive language, defamatory contents and hate speech in these platforms have become very common.

Supreme Court's take on emerging challenges of social media

- In view of such emerging challenges, the Supreme Court in 2018, in the **Tehseen S. Poonawalla v/s Union of India case**, directed the government to curb and stop dissemination of explosive messages and videos on various social media platforms.
- The Court in 2017 also observed that the government may frame necessary guidelines to eliminate child pornography, rape and gang rape imageries, videos and sites in content hosting platforms and other applications.
- The new rules are thus in accordance with the previous Supreme Court observations.

- As per the rules, intermediaries are mandated to remove or disable contents that are against the safety and dignity of individuals within 24 hours of receiving of complaints. Such complaints can be filed either by the individual or a person on his/her behalf.
- According to the government, knowing the "first originator of information" (also known as "traceability") of messages that cause violence, riots, terrorism, rape or threat to national security fall under reasonable exceptions to Right to Privacy - which again is not absolute as per the Constitution.

Technological Hurdles with Respect to Traceability

- Social media companies have expressed apprehensions about the identification of traceability when required to do so by authorities which could possibly lead to the breaking the of end-to-end encryption and can compromise users' privacy.
- The government, however, has stated that traceability would only be required in case of "very serious offences" that threaten the sovereignty and integrity of India.

- Further, it could also be implemented without breaking the end-to-end encryption.
- The onus, however, will lie on the companies to find a technological solution for the same.

CONCLUSION

- The imperative of striking the right balance between fundamental rights and ascertaining the reasonableness of a restriction has been a constant effort since the adoption of the Constitution.
- The debate has now reached the digital world. The on-going tussle between private, tech giants who own a substantial amount of Big Data, governments desirous of imposing reasonable restrictions and users worried about issues relating to data privacy and constraints on freedom of speech and expression is likely to get more complicated before optimum solutions can be arrived at.
- The IT Rules 2021 seek to address concerns of the citizens without infringing on their privacy and personal liberties, while maintaining digital sovereignty at the same time.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

CONTEXT

The Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) ethics officer has adjudged Tamil Nadu Cricket Association president to be in conflict of interest. This is the first time the ethics officer has found a state association president to be in a position of conflict.

◎ BACKGROUND

- Rupa, who is the daughter of former BCCI president, became the TNCA president in 2019.
- Following a plea, the ethics officer held that Rupa was perceived to be in conflict for holding two posts – TNCA president and one of the directors of India Cements Limited, which in turn runs Chennai Super Kings Cricket Limited.
- The Ethics officer held "Undoubtedly, Rupa has at least indirect (if not direct) interest in CSKCL which has entered into an agreement/contract with the BCCI, thus attracting one of the forms of conflict of interest."

◎ ANALYSIS

What is Conflict of Interest (CoI)?

- Conflict of interest may arise in situations where a legislator benefits directly or indirectly in a private capacity from the conduct of his public duties. Interest could be of two broad categories; pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest.
 - **Pecuniary interests** involve an actual or potential financial gain or loss.
 - **Non-pecuniary interest** does not have a financial component.
- They may arise from personal or family relationships, or involvement in sporting, social or cultural activities.

Different types of CoI

The following types of typical conflicts of interest listed in seven categories by Canadian political scientists Ken Kernaghan and John Langford:

- **Self-dealing:** For example, you work for government and use your official position to secure a contract for a private consulting company you own. Another instance is using your government position to get a summer job for your daughter.
- **Accepting benefits:** Bribery is one example; substantial [non token] gifts are another. For example, you are the purchasing agent for your department and you accept a case of liquor from a major supplier.

- **Influence peddling:** Here, the professional solicits benefits in exchange for using her influence to unfairly advance the interests of a particular party.
- **Using your employer's property for private advantage:** This could be as blatant as stealing office supplies for home use. Or it might be a bit more subtle, say, using software which is licensed to your employer for private consulting work of your own. In the first case, the employer's permission eliminates the conflict; while in the second, it doesn't.
- **Using confidential information:** While working for a private client, you learn that the client is planning to buy land in your region. You quickly rush out and buy the land in your wife's name.
- **Outside employment or moonlighting:** An example would be setting up a business on the side that is in direct competition with your employer. Another case would be taking on so many outside clients that you don't have the time and energy to devote to your regular employer.
- **Post-employment:** Here a dicey situation can be one in which a person who resigns from public or private employment and goes into business in the same area. For example, a former public servant sets up a practice lobbying the former department in which she was employed.

Mechanism to check CoI

In order to minimise possible misuse of public office, various broad levels of regulations are used.

- **Declaration:** Office bearers may be required to disclose interests where they hold pecuniary interests (income from employment, shareholding, and directorship) and non-pecuniary interests (membership of an interest group).
- **Recusal:** In some cases, the office bearers may be asked not to participate in the discussion or vote on a topic where there may be a conflict of interest.
- **Incompatibility:** Office bearers may be prohibited from holding office of profit or some types of private jobs. There may also be some restriction related to post-tenure employment.
- **Regulation of Gifts and Travel:** There may be restrictions on the value and source of gifts that an office bearer may receive.

Comparison of CoI policies in other countries related to legislators/ministers

• USA

- Code of Conduct gives detailed guidelines such as prohibition of gifts, conflict of interest, and intermingling of a member's personal and campaign funds.
- Members cannot occupy certain posts simultaneously. They are required to file annual disclosure statements and are banned from lobbying for a year after their tenure is over

• UK

- Members must declare all relevant past and potential interest before debating an issue in Parliament or a committee.
- Members are required to register their pecuniary interest. They cannot be employed in certain posts during tenure (such as armed forces, police, and clergy).

• Australia

- The federal Parliament has a Ministerial Code (some states have Codes of Conduct for MPs). There are provision for registers of pecuniary interest, lobbyist registers and codes governing the post separation employment of Ministers

• Canada

- Ministers must follow the Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment Code that outlines ethical standards and private and public interests. It prohibits use of information obtained officially for personal gain.
- All Members are barred from voting on matters in which they have pecuniary interest.
- There is a lobbyist registration system. Ministers cannot engage in an outside profession or actively in business.

◎ CONCLUSION

It is important therefore, to manage these conflicts of interest in the public space through institutional mechanisms, a system of penalties in case of violations and a strict disclosure system. Most importantly, however, this problem can only be combated through the participation of office bearers in maintaining the spirit and letter of the Code of Conduct in their organisation.

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INDIA ELECTED TO UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL FOR 2022-24 TERM

◎ **CONTEXT:** India has been elected to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) for a two-year period starting next year.

◎ **ABOUT**

What is ECOSOC?

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the 6 principal organs of the United Nations System established by the UN Charter in 1945.
- It consists of 54 Members of the United Nations elected by the General Assembly.
- ECOSOC coordinates economic, social, and related work of the fourteen United Nations specialized agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions.
- The Council's 54 member Governments are elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.
- Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation with 14 allocated to African states, 11 to Asian states, six to eastern European states, 10 to Latin American and Caribbean states and 13 to western European and other states.

Other New members

- **Asia-Pacific:** India, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Oman.
- **African states:** Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Mauritius, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- **Eastern European states:** Croatia and the Czech Republic.
- **Latin American and Caribbean states:** Belize, Chile and Peru.
- In the Economic and Social Council by-election, Greece, New Zealand and Denmark were elected for a term of office from January to December 2022 and Israel was elected for a term of office beginning January 1, 2022 and until December 31, 2023.

MODEL TENANCY ACT

◎ **CONTEXT:** Central government has recently approved the Model Tenancy Act (MTA) to streamline the process of renting property in India.

Key features of the Act

- **Unlocking of vacant house:** The Act will facilitate unlocking of vacant houses for rental housing purposes.
- **Balancing the rights of both landlords and tenants:** It is aimed at bridging the trust deficit between tenants and landlords by clearly delineating their obligations.
 - **Monetary ceiling:** There is no monetary ceiling under MTA, which enables parties to negotiate and execute the agreement on mutually agreed terms. It will give confidence to landlords to let out their vacant premises.
 - **Mandatory agreement:** MTA mandates for a written agreement for all new tenancies which are to be submitted to a Rent Authority.
 - **Digital platform:** A digital platform will be set up in the local vernacular language or the language of the state/UT for submitting the tenancy agreement and other documents.

- **Mutual consent:** The rent and duration of the tenancy will be fixed by mutual consent between the owner and tenant through a written agreement.
- **Existing tenancies:** MTA will be applicable prospectively and will not affect existing tenancies.
- **Position of States:** States can adopt the new act as it is by fresh legislation, as it is a state subject, or they can amend their existing rent acts suitably to factor in the new MTA.
 - States and Union Territories have MoUs signed with the Centre under the **PradhanMantriAwasYojana-Urban** which has this provision.

Need for this Act

- As per Census 2011, more than 1 crore houses were lying vacant in urban areas across the country and existing rent control laws are restricting the growth of rental housing as they discourage the owners from renting houses due to fear of not getting them back.
- In absence of a model law, there are informal agreements with arbitrary clauses and often litigation arising out of disputes.

SAGE INITIATIVE AND PORTAL

◎ CONTEXT:

The Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment virtually launched the SAGE (Seniorcare Ageing Growth Engine) initiative and SAGE portal for elderly persons.

- SAGE programme and SAGE portal have been launched with a view to help such persons who are interested in entrepreneurship in the field of providing services for elderly care.

The SAGE portal

- The portal will be a "one-stop access" of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
- The start-ups will be selected on the basis of innovation in providing products and services across sectors such as health, housing, care centers, apart from technological access linked to finances, food and wealth management, and legal guidance.
- It will be opened for applications from 5th June, 2021 onwards.
- The start-ups will be selected by an independent screening committee of experts.
- A fund of upto Rs.1 crore as one-time equity will be granted to each selected start-up.

SAGE project

- The project aims to identify, evaluate, verify, aggregate, and deliver products, solutions and services directly to the stakeholders.
- The Ministry will act as a facilitator, enabling the elderly to access the products through these identified start-ups.
- The Ministry has designed SAGE programme as per the suggestions of the Empowered Committee on start-ups for the elderly to solicit the involvement of youth and their innovative ideas for elderly care.
- The EEC report has highlighted that the business opportunities in this space could emerge from social enterprises, technology start-ups, legal and financial services and infrastructure and managed-care systems.

Need of the project

- As per surveys, the share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from around 7.5% in 2001 to almost 12.5% by 2026, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.
- The need is to create a more robust elder care ecosystem in India, especially in the post-COVID phase.
- Keeping this need in mind, an amount of Rs 100 crore has been assigned for the promotion of the silver economy.

What is silver economy?

- The silver economy includes all those economic activities, products and services designed to meet the needs of people over 50.
- This concept, derived from the so-called silver market that emerged in Japan, — the country with the highest percentage of people over 65 — during the 1970s to refer to the senior market, brings together sectors as diverse as health, banking, automotive, energy, housing, telecommunications, leisure and tourism, among others.
- One of the keys to the silver economy will be in technological innovation. Advances in home automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), e-Health and other services typical of smart cities, arouse the interest of a public that is mature but that is too young to feel old.
- Its main element is gerontechnology as a new scientific, research and implementation paradigm.

What is Gerontechnology?

- Gerontechnology, originated from a mix of "Gerontology" and "Technology", which includes various technical systems and solutions to help the elderly and/or their caregivers perform basic daily activities.
- Gerontechnologies enable elders to maintain their autonomy or to compensate for functional impairments.

EL SALVADOR'S DECISION TO USE BITCOIN AS LEGAL TENDER

© CONTEXT:

El Salvador is declaring the Bitcoin cryptocurrency as a legal tender in the Central American country.

- If that happens, El Salvador would become the first country in the world to formally adopt the virtual currency.

About the adoption of Bitcoin by El Salvador

- It depends heavily on remittances sent by Salvadorians from abroad.
- Around a quarter of the country's citizens live in the US, and in 2020 they sent home more than \$6 billion in remittances i.e. more than 20% of the GDP.
- A big chunk of those 6 billion dollars is lost to intermediaries. By using Bitcoin, the amount received by more than a million low income families will increase in the equivalent of billions of dollars every year.

- Also, Bitcoin will help increase financial inclusion in El Salvador, where 70% of the population does not have a bank account and relies on the informal economy.

Attitude of governments towards cryptocurrencies

- Governments around the world are now looking to launch their own virtual tokens, called central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).
- US has taken a decisive step towards issuing its own CBDC.
- In India too, the government has floated **The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021**.
- It will prohibit all private cryptocurrencies and lay down the regulatory framework for the launch of an "official digital currency".

About CBDC

- A central bank digital currency (CBDC) utilizes technology to represent a country's official currency in digital form.
- Unlike decentralized cryptocurrency projects like Bitcoin, a CBDC would be centralized and regulated by a country's monetary authority.

NITI AAYOG RELEASES SDG INDIA INDEX AND DASHBOARD 2020–21

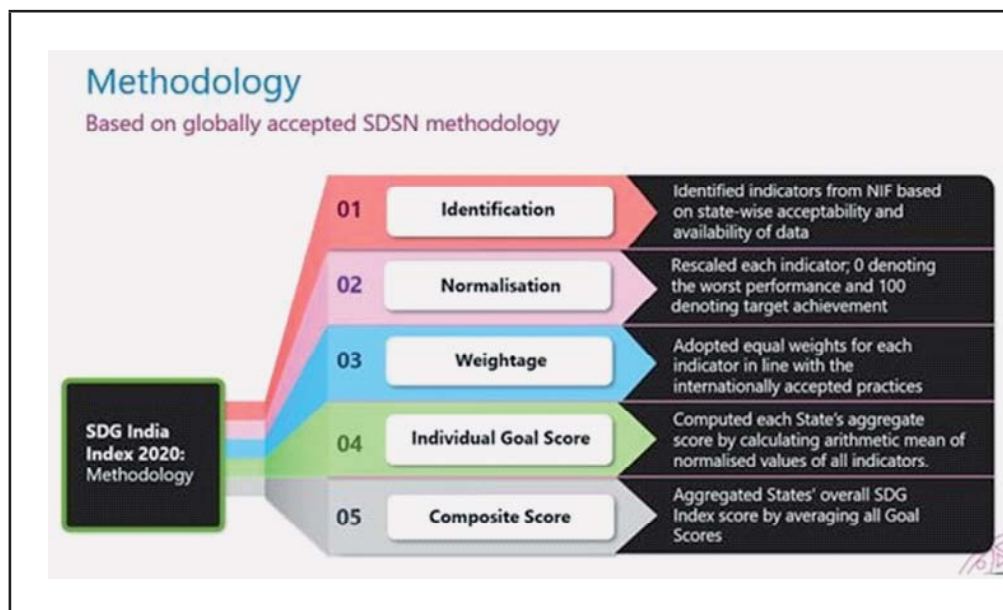
◎ **CONTEXT:** The third edition of the SDG India Index and Dashboard 2020–21 has been released by NITI Aayog.

◎ **ABOUT:** What is SDG India Index?

- The SDG India Index & Dashboard measures the progress at the national and sub-national levels in our journey towards meeting the Global Goals and targets.
- **Design and developed by:** Designed and developed by NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the United Nations in India. It has also been successful as an advocacy tool to propagate the messages of sustainability, resilience, and partnerships.
- **Launched in:** 2018
- **Coverage:** From covering 13 Goals, 39 targets, and 62 indicators in its first edition in 2018, this third edition of the Index covers all 17 Goals, 70 targets, and 115 indicators.

Methodology

- States and Union Territories are classified as below based on their SDG India Index score:
 - **Aspirant:** 0–49
 - **Performer:** 50–64
 - **Front-Runner:** 65–99
 - **Achiever:** 100



Overall Results and Findings

- The country's overall SDG score improved by 6 points—from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020–21.
- This positive stride towards achieving the targets is largely driven by exemplary country-wide performance in Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), where the composite Goal scores are 83 and 92, respectively.

The top-five and bottom-five States in SDG India Index 2020–21:

Top-5 States	75	Kerala
	74	Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu
	72	Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Uttarakhand
	71	Sikkim
	70	Maharashtra
Bottom-5 States	61	Chhattisgarh, Nagaland, Odisha
	60	Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh
	57	Assam
	56	Jharkhand
	52	Bihar

- Mizoram, Haryana, and Uttarakhand are the top gainers in 2020–21 in terms of improvement in score from 2019, with an increase of 12, 10 and 8 points, respectively.

SARDAR SAROVAR DAM

◎ CONTEXT:

Sardar Sarovar Dam released about 1.3 Million Acre Feet (MAF) water for irrigation between April 1 and May 31 in its command area of 21.29 lakh hectares.

- It is called the 'lifeline of Gujarat'. Usually it does not release water during summer for irrigation.

Important details on Sardar Sarovar Dam

- It is a terminal dam built on Narmada at **Kevadia** in Gujarat's Narmada district.
- **States:** Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- A vision of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the foundation stone of the project was laid out by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on April 5, 1961.
- A **Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal (NWDT)** was created in 1969 to decide the fate of the project which gave its verdict in 1979.
- Accordingly, the 35 billion cubic metres of water available for consumption from the dam, Madhya Pradesh would receive 65 percent, Gujarat 32 percent and Rajasthan and Maharashtra would be eligible for the remaining 3 percent.
- The Planning Commission finally approved the project in 1988.

Narmada

- The Narmada, the largest west flowing river of the Peninsula, rises near Amarkantak range of mountains in Madhya Pradesh.
- It is the fifth largest river in the country and the largest one in Gujarat.
- It traverses Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat and meets the Gulf of Cambay.
- The total length of the river from source to sea is 1312 kilometers while the length up to dam site is 1163 kilometers.

Narmada Basin

- The total basin area of the river is 97,410 square kilometer comprising-
 - 85,858 square kilometer in Madhya Pradesh
 - 1658 square kilometer in Maharashtra
 - 9894 square kilometer in Gujarat
- The drainage area up to dam site is 88,000 square kilometer.
- The mean annual rainfall in the basin is 112 centimeters.

WHAT THE G7 CORPORATE TAX DEAL MEANS FOR INDIA

◎ CONTEXT:

Advanced economies making up the G7 grouping have reached a "historic" deal on taxing multinational companies and to ratify a global minimum corporate tax rate to counter the possibility of countries undercutting each other to attract investments.

About the agreement

- The first decision is to force multinationals to pay taxes where they operate.
- The second decision in the agreement commits states to a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15% to avoid countries undercutting each other.
- The agreement will now be discussed in detail at a meeting of G20 financial ministers and central bank governors in July.

Challenges and problems

- Getting all major nations on the same page due to right of the sovereign to decide the nation's tax policy.
- A global minimum rate would essentially take away a tool that countries use to push policies that suit them.
- Also, a global minimum tax rate will do little to tackle tax evasion.

Where does India stand?

- India already had announced a sharp cut in corporate taxes for domestic companies to 22% and for new domestic manufacturing companies to 15%, broadly at par with the average 23% rate in Asian countries.
- Also, existing domestic companies opting for the concessional taxation regime will not be required to pay any Minimum Alternate Tax.
- The effective tax rate, inclusive of surcharge and cess, for Indian domestic companies is around 25.17%.
- The economic division will look into the pros and cons of the new proposal and then will decide.

About G7

- The G7 (Group of Seven) is an organisation made up of the world's seven largest so-called advanced economies. They are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the United States.
- Russia joined in 1998, creating the "G8", but was excluded in 2014 for its takeover of Crimea.
- China has never been a member, despite its large economy, as its relatively low level of wealth per person is not seen as an advanced economy in the way the G7 members are.
- Representatives from the European Union are usually present and India, South Korea and Australia have been invited this year.
- The UK holds the G7 presidency for 2021

CHINA'S 'ARTIFICIAL SUN'

◎ CONTEXT:

China's 'artificial sun' EAST achieved a peak temperature of 288 million degrees Fahrenheit, which is over ten times hotter than the sun, for 20 second.

About the new record

- China's **Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST)** mimics the energy generation process of the sun.
- It set a new record after it ran at 216 million degrees Fahrenheit (120 million degrees Celsius) for 101 seconds, according to state media. For another 20 seconds, the "artificial sun" also achieved a peak temperature of 288 million degrees Fahrenheit (160 million degrees Celsius), which is over ten times hotter than the sun.
- **Significance:** It is a significant step in the country's quest to unlock clean and limitless energy, with minimal waste products.

China's 'artificial sun' EAST

- The Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST) reactor is an advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device located at the Institute of Plasma Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (ASIPP) in Hefei, China.
- The purpose of the artificial sun is to replicate the process of nuclear fusion, which is the same reaction that powers the sun.
- The EAST is one of three major domestic tokamaks that are presently being operated across the country.
- It first became operational in 2006.
- EAST has set several records for the duration of confinement of exceedingly hot plasma.
- The EAST project is part of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) facility, which will become the world's largest nuclear fusion reactor when it becomes operational in 2035.
- The project includes the contributions of several countries, including India, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States.

How the 'artificial sun' EAST works?

- The EAST Tokamak device is designed to replicate the nuclear fusion process carried out by the sun and stars.
 - Nuclear fusion is a process through which high levels of energy are produced without generating large quantities of waste.
 - For nuclear fusion to occur, tremendous heat and pressure are applied on hydrogen atoms so that they fuse together.
 - The nuclei of deuterium and tritium — both found in hydrogen — are made to fuse together to create a helium nucleus, a neutron along with a whole lot of energy.
- Fuel is heated to temperatures of over 150 million degrees C so that it forms a hot plasma "soup" of subatomic particles. With the help of a strong magnetic field, the plasma is kept away from the walls of the reactor to ensure it does not cool down and lose its potential to generate large amounts of energy.
- The plasma is confined for long durations for fusion to take place.

Next move

- The next goal for the scientists behind the experimental reactor is to maintain the high temperature for a long period of time.
- Previously, the EAST had reached a record temperature of 100 million degrees Celsius in 2018.

DISCOVERY OF NEW ENZYME FOR CELL STABILITY

◎ CONTEXT:

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) scientists have discovered an enzyme that helps maintain the stability and integrity of cell walls in bacteria such as *Escherichia coli*.

About the newly discovered enzyme

- The enzyme is named as 'LdtF'.
- **Area of action:** Cell wall of gram-negative bacteria has an outer membrane and an inner membrane. In between these two layers a layer of 'peptidoglycan', a polymer of amino acids and sugars is also found.

- A lipoprotein is known to link the outer membrane to the layer of peptidoglycan.
- **Function:** The newly discovered enzyme, 'LdtF' could cleave the lipoprotein from the peptidoglycan.
 - This enzyme plays a vital role in the formation of covalent linkages between the bacterial outer membrane and an inner polymer layer of peptidoglycan, that protects bacteria from environmental stress.
 - Absence of this LdtF enhanced growth defects and increased the peptidoglycan-lipoprotein linkages in the bacteria.
 - The presence of this enzyme, however, decreased the levels of peptidoglycan-bound lipoprotein, suggesting its role in modulating the peptidoglycan-lipoprotein linkages.
 - Such LdtF-mediated modulation of the cell wall gives bacteria flexibility and a survival advantage in fluctuating environmental conditions.
- **Significance:** This study will help understand the fundamental bacterial cell wall biology and identify alternate drug targets for the development of new antimicrobials.

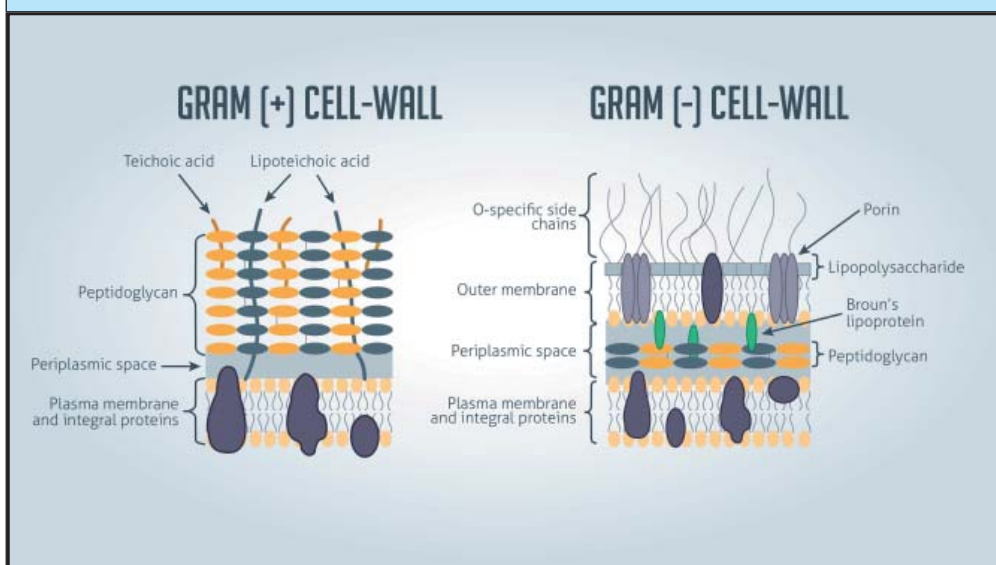
Gram negative and Gram positive bacteria

Gram-Positive bacteria

- ▶ A single-layered, smooth cell wall.
- ▶ It is a thick layer of peptidoglycan and it can also be multilayered.
- ▶ The outer membrane is absent.
- ▶ These bacteria retain the crystal violet colour after they are washed with acetone or alcohol and appear as purple-coloured under the microscope after gram staining.

Gram-Negative bacteria

- ▶ A double-layered, wavy cell-wall.
- ▶ It is a thin layer or often single-layered peptidoglycan.
- ▶ The outer membrane is present.
- ▶ These bacteria do not retain the stain colour after washing with acetone or alcohol and appear as pink-coloured under the microscope after gram staining.



NEW DRUG FOR ALZHEIMER'S

◎ CONTEXT:

The US Food and Drug Administration has approved Biogen's aducanumab, the first drug to target an underlying cause of Alzheimer's disease.

- The drug, to be sold under the brand **Aduhelm**. It is the first new approval of an Alzheimer's drug since 2003 and the only treatment designed to slow progression of the mind-robbing disease.

About the drug

- The drug aducanumab, with brand name Aduhelm, is a monoclonal antibody that is designed to reduce the presence of amyloid beta.
- The drug is to be given as a monthly intravenous infusion.
- In clinical trials, some patients given the highest dose of the drug experienced brain swelling and had to be monitored.
- Headache is also a reported side effect of the drug.
- It is a novel drug that is designed only to slow the progression of Alzheimer's and not a cure.

Alzheimer's disease

- Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia.
- It affects tens of millions of people worldwide, and this number is rising dramatically.
- The social and economic burden of Alzheimer's disease is high.
- Forgetfulness and memory problems are often early symptoms, but as the illness progresses, patients tend to become confused, may lose their way around familiar places, and have difficulties with planning and completing simple tasks.

Cause

- The amyloid hypothesis proposes **β-amyloid** (Aβ) as the main cause of the disease.
- The mis-folding of the extracellular Aβ protein accumulated in senile plaques and the intracellular deposition of misfolded protein in neurofibrillary tangles cause memory loss and confusion and result in personality and cognitive decline over time.
- Accumulated Aβ peptide is the main component of senile plaques and derives from the proteolytic cleavage of a larger glycoprotein named amyloid precursor protein (APP).
- APP is a type 1 membrane glycoprotein that plays an important role in a range of biological activities, including neuronal development, signaling, intracellular transport, and other aspects of neuronal homeostasis.
- Several APP cleavage products may be major contributors to Alzheimer's disease, causing neuronal dysfunction.



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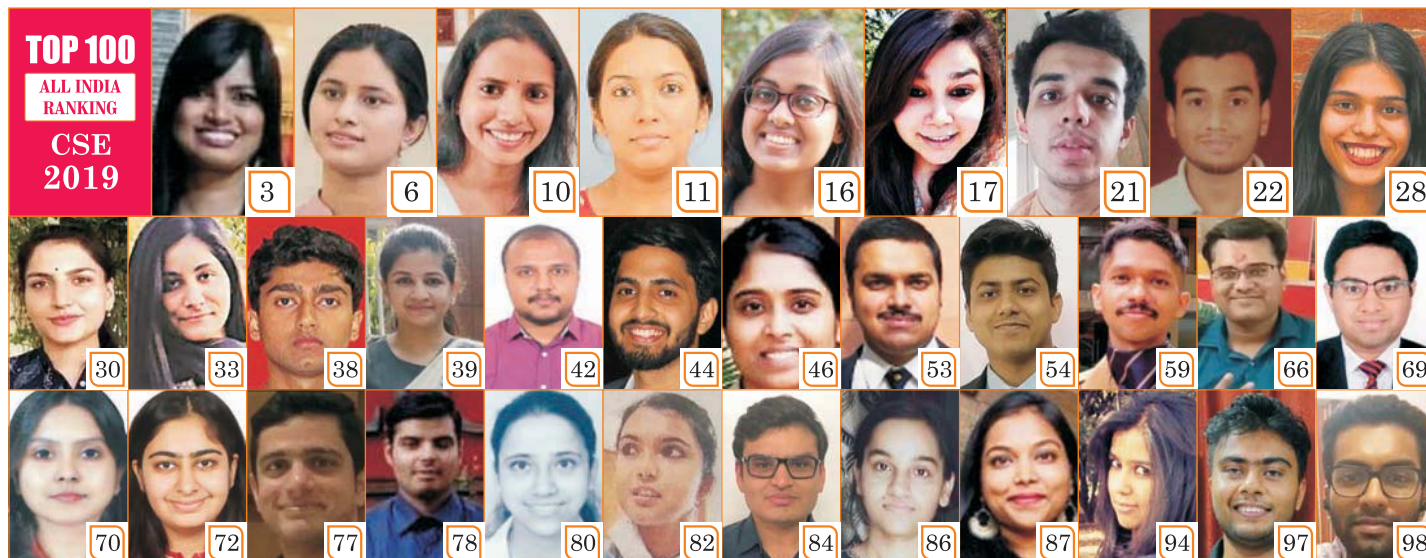
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