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CONTENTS

PIB (1st to 15th MAY, 2021)

S. No.	Area		Topics	Page No.
1.	GS 2	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	Operation Samudra Setu II	01
2.			4 th India-Swiss Financial Dialogue	01
3.		POLITY & GOVERNANCE	PM-KISAN	02
4.	GS 3	ECONOMY	Report on accelerating digital financial inclusion	02
5.			Strategic disinvestment	03
6.			Import of Oxygen Concentrators	04
7.		AGRICULTURE	Development of Horticulture sector	05
8.		ENVIRONMENT	IREDA bags “Green Urja Award”	06
9.		SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	3 rd Arctic Science Ministerial	06
10.			Oxygen from modified Industrial Nitrogen Plants	08
11.			5G Technology	09
12.			National Telemedicine Service (e-Sanjeevani)	10
13.			Mucormycosis- Fungal Infection	11
14.	GS 2	POLITY & GOVERNANCE	Women Military Police	12



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1 Operation Samudra Setu II

CONTEXT:

- The Indian Navy has launched 'Operation Samudra Setu-II' to meet the country's oxygen requirement amid the surge in Covid-19 cases in the second wave and the acute shortage of liquid medical oxygen (LMO).

About the mission

- As a part of the operation, the Navy has deployed INS (Indian Navy Ships) Kolkata, Kochi, Talwar, Tabar, Triakand, Jalashwa and Airavat for shipment of oxygen-filled cryogenic containers and associated medical equipment from various countries.

Operation Samudra Setu

- Operation Samudra Setu was launched in 2020 by the Navy to rescue Indian citizens stranded in neighbouring countries amid the Covid-19 outbreak.
- Around 4,000 stranded citizens were successfully brought back to India, said commander Karnik.

What is Liquid Medical Oxygen?

- Liquid Medical Oxygen is high purity oxygen used for medical treatment. It has been developed for use in the human body.
- Due to its low melting and boiling points, oxygen is in a gaseous state at room temperature.
- Liquification enables storage in larger volume and easier transportation.
- There are various methods through which LMO can be produced.
- The most common production method is the separation of oxygen in Air Separation Units (ASUs).

Air Separation Units (ASUs)

- ASUs are production plants that separate large volumes of gases.
- ASUs use a method known as the 'Fractional Distillation Method' to produce pure oxygen from atmospheric air.

2 4th India-Swiss Financial Dialogue

CONTEXT:

- 4th India-Swiss Financial Dialogue held virtually.

ABOUT:

- The Dialogue covered sharing of experiences by both countries for collaboration on various aspects including investments, International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA), National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIFF), FinTech, sustainable finance and cross border financial services.

- Further, matters relating to G20, IMF and tax challenges arising from the digitisation of the economy was discussed along with infrastructure financing.
- Both sides emphasised importance of coordinated bilateral action on clean and resilient post-COVID world.

India -Switzerland relation:

- ▶ India and Switzerland have had cordial and friendly relations based on shared values of democracy and rule of law.
- ▶ India's policy of non-alignment and Switzerland's traditional policy of neutrality has led to a close understanding between the two countries.
- ▶ Both the countries have several bilateral dialogue mechanisms in place and this Financial Dialogue remains amongst the most important.

3

PM-KISAN

CONTEXT:

- PM released 8th instalment of financial benefit under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN).

ABOUT:

- The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana was announced during the 2019 interim Union Budget.
- Under the scheme, a financial benefit of Rs. 6000/- per year is provided to the eligible beneficiary farmer families, payable in three equal 4-monthly installments of Rs.2000/- each.
- The fund is transferred directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.
- In this scheme, Samman Rashi of over Rs. 1.15 lakh crores has been transferred to farmer families so far.
- State Government and UT administration will identify the farmer families which are eligible for support as per scheme guidelines.

4

Report on accelerating digital financial inclusion

CONTEXT:

- NITI Aayog and MasterCard released a report titled 'Connected Commerce: Creating a Roadmap for a Digitally Inclusive Bharat'.

ABOUT:

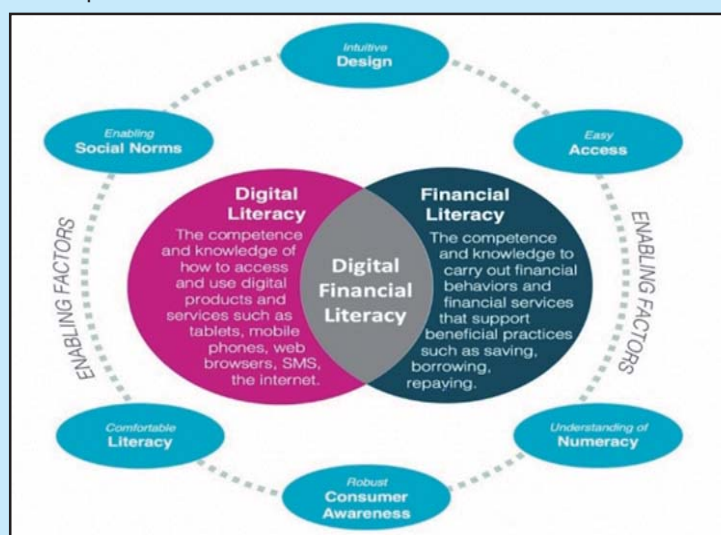
- The report identifies challenges in accelerating digital financial inclusion in India and provides recommendations for making digital services accessible to its 1.3 billion citizens.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has alerted the economy to the fragility of cash and the resilience of digital technologies, including digital payments.
- Even with restrictions, commerce needed to continue to fulfil basic livelihood needs—and it was digital technologies that made it possible.

Key recommendations in the report include:

- Strengthening the payment infrastructure to promote a level playing field for NBFCs and banks.
- Digitizing registration and compliance processes and diversifying credit sources to enable growth opportunities for MSMEs.
- Building information sharing systems, including a 'fraud repository', and ensuring that online digital commerce platforms carry warnings to alert consumers to the risk of frauds.
- Enabling agricultural NBFCs to access low-cost capital and deploy a 'phygital' (physical + digital) model for achieving better long-term digital outcomes. Digitizing land records will also provide a major boost to the sector.
- To make city transit seamlessly accessible to all with minimal crowding and queues, leveraging existing smart phones and contactless cards, and aim for an inclusive, interoperable, and fully open system such as that of the London 'Tube'.

Digital financial inclusion :

- Digital financial inclusion involves the deployment of the cost-saving digital means to reach currently financially excluded and underserved populations with a range of formal financial services suited to their needs that are responsibly delivered at a cost affordable to customers and sustainable for providers.



5

Strategic disinvestment

CONTEXT:

- Cabinet approves strategic disinvestment and transfer of management control in IDBI Bank Limited.

ABOUT:

What is Strategic disinvestment?

- When the government decides to transfer the ownership and control of a public sector entity to some other entity, either private or public, the process is called strategic disinvestment.

- The **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)** which comes under the **Finance Ministry** defines Strategic disinvestment as follows:
- "Strategic disinvestment would imply the sale of a substantial portion of the Government shareholding of a central public sector enterprises (CPSE) of up to 50%, or such higher percentage as the competent authority may determine, along with transfer of management control."

Key-highlights

- The extent of respective shareholding to be divested by the government and LIC will be decided at the time of structuring of transaction in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The government and LIC together own more than 94 per cent of equity of IDBI Bank (45.48 per cent and 49.24 per cent respectively).
- LIC is currently the promoter of IDBI Bank with management control and the government is co-promoter.

IDBI Bank Ltd.

- Industrial Development Bank of India was established in 1964 by **Industrial Development Bank of India Act, 1964** to provide credit and other financial facilities for the development of the fledgling Indian industry.
- It is a development finance institution and a subsidiary of **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)**.

6

Import of Oxygen Concentrators

CONTEXT:

- Import of Oxygen Concentrators for personal use has been included in exempted category list.

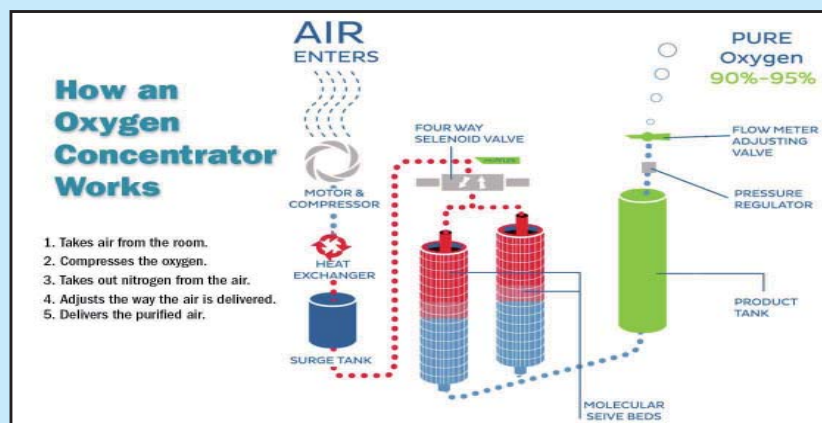
ABOUT:

- In the list of exempted categories, Customs clearance is sought as "gifts".
- Currently, all imported goods declared as gift with customs authorities attract customs duty and integrated GST.
- Earlier, oxygen concentrators were not mentioned in the list. Now, it has been added on account of its high demand due to COVID-19 cases.

Oxygen concentrator:

- An oxygen concentrator is a medical device that concentrates oxygen from ambient air.
- It is in high demand due to increasing COVID-19 cases in the country.
- The atmospheric air has roughly 78% nitrogen and 21% oxygen.
- Oxygen concentrators are simple devices which do precisely what its name promises – they take in ambient air and increase the oxygen concentration, by filtering out and throwing away nitrogen.
- These Oxygen concentrators work the same way in supplying oxygen needed by the body such as oxygen tanks or cylinders, with the use of a cannula, oxygen masks or nasal tubes.

- The difference is that, while the cylinders need to be refilled, the Oxygen Concentrators can work 24 x 7.



7 Development of Horticulture sector

CONTEXT:

- Keeping in view the huge potential and role of the horticulture sector in increasing farmer's income, the Government of India has allocated Rs. 2250 Crore for development of horticulture sector during 2021-22.

ABOUT:

Government intervention in the horticulture sector has led to the situation wherein horticulture production has surpassed the agriculture production in the country.

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is implementing **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)** with effect from 2014-15, for realizing the potential of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew and cocoa.
- During the year 2019-20, the country recorded its highest ever horticulture production of 320.77 million tonnes from an area of 25.66 million hectares.
- MIDH has played a significant role in increasing the area under horticulture crops. Area and production during the years 2014 – 15 to 2019 – 20 has increased by 9% and 14% respectively.
- Moreover, the mission has boosted best practices to be followed in farms which have significantly improved the quality of produce and productivity of farmland.
- The initiative of MIDH has not only resulted in India's self-sufficiency in the horticulture sector but also contributed towards achieving sustainable development goals of zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, no poverty, gender equality etc.
- However, the sector is still facing a lot of challenges in terms of high post-harvest loss and gaps in post-harvest management and supply chain infrastructure.

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH):

- In the case of North Eastern States and Himalayan States, GOI contributes 90%.

- ▶ Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.
- ▶ Under MIDH, Government of India (GOI) contributes 60%, of total outlay for developmental programmes in all the states except states in North East and Himalayas, 40% share is contributed by State Governments.

8 IREDA bags "Green Urja Award"

CONTEXT:

- IREDA has been conferred with 'Green Urja Award' for being the leading public institution in financing institution for renewable energy this year by Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

ABOUT:

- The award recognises our immense contribution to the development of the renewable energy sector in line with the Prime Minister's vision of **Atma Nirbhar Bharat**.
- IREDA gets the award for the pivotal and developmental role it plays in green energy financing.
- Despite the pandemic time, IREDA has ended the year 2020-21 ended on a strong note and disbursed the second-highest (from the date of inception) amount of loan.

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)

- ▶ IREDA under the administrative control of the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the only dedicated institution for financing renewable energy & energy efficiency projects in India.
- ▶ Since its inception, the company has played a catalytic role in developing the market for financing renewable energy & energy efficiency projects.

9 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial

CONTEXT:

- Recently India participated in the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial Meeting.

What is 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial meeting?

- ASM3, jointly organised by Iceland and Japan, is the first Ministerial meeting being held in Asia.
- The meeting is designed to provide opportunities to various stakeholders, including academia, indigenous communities, governments and policymakers, to enhance collective understanding of the Arctic region, emphasize and engage in constant monitoring, and strengthen observations.
- The theme for this year is 'Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic'.

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**13
JUNE**

- ▶ The first two meetings—ASM1 and ASM2—were held in the USA in 2016 and Germany in 2018, respectively.

Key-highlights of the meeting

- India shared its plans to contribute observing systems in the Arctic, both in-situ and by remote sensing.
- The country would deploy open ocean mooring in the Arctic for long-term monitoring of upper ocean variables and marine meteorological parameters.
- The launch of **NISER (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite mission**, in collaboration with the USA, is underway.
 - NISER aims to conduct global measurements of the cause and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.
- India's contributions to the **Sustained Arctic Observational Network (SAON)** would continue.

Arctic Council:

- ▶ The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum that addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and the indigenous people of the Arctic.
- ▶ The eight countries with sovereignty over the lands within the Arctic Circle constitute the members of the council: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.
- ▶ Outside these, there are some observer states including India.



CONTEXT:

- Considering the requirement of medical oxygen amidst the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Government of India explored the feasibility of conversion of existing nitrogen plants to produce oxygen.

Key-highlights

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) was asked to explore the feasibility of using existing nitrogen units to produce oxygen. CPCB have identified such potential industries, wherein existing Nitrogen generation plants may be spared for production of oxygen.

- The process of converting the existing **Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) nitrogen plants** for production of oxygen was discussed.
- In the nitrogen plants, **Carbon Molecular Sieve (CMS)** is used whereas **Zeolite Molecular Sieve (ZMS)** is required for producing oxygen.
- Therefore, by replacing CMS with ZMS and carrying out few other changes such as oxygen analyzer, control panel system, flow valves etc. existing nitrogen plants can be modified to produce oxygen.

Quick facts about nitrogen

- ▶ Nitrogen gas (N₂) makes up 78.1% of the volume of the Earth's air. It's the most common uncombined (pure) element on Earth.
- ▶ Nitrogen is one of the three macronutrients required by plants for growth and development, along with phosphorus and potassium.
- ▶ Nitrogen-rich condition induces plant growth, particularly the growth of stems and leaves, while delaying flowering.

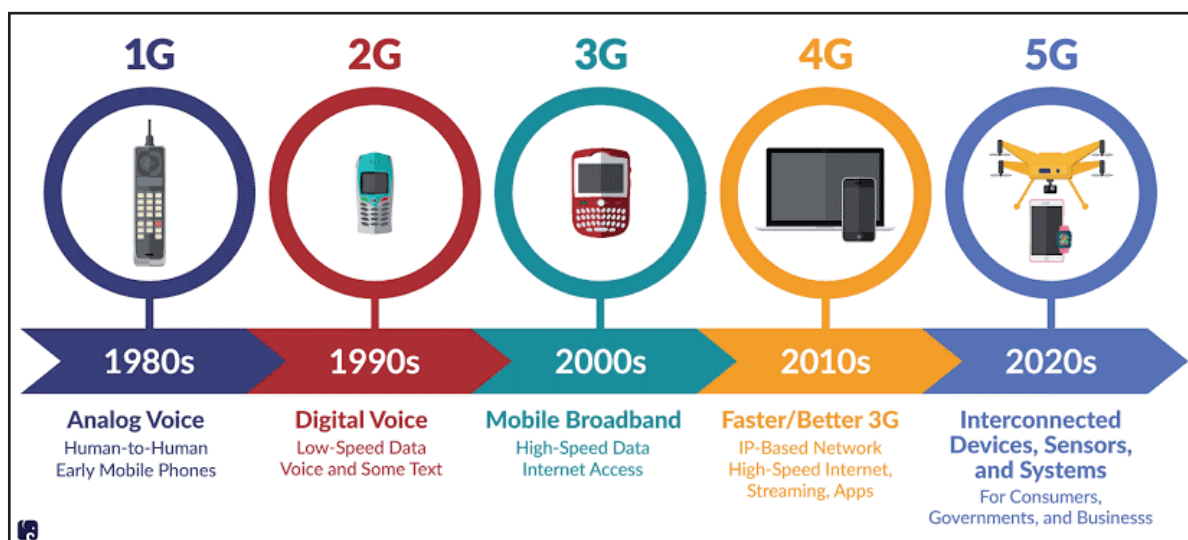
11 5G Technology

CONTEXT:

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, approved , permissions to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for conducting trials for use and applications of 5G technology.

What is 5G technology?

- In telecommunications, 5G is the fifth generation technology standard for broadband cellular networks.
- It is the planned successor to the 4G networks which provide connectivity to most current cellphones.
- Like its predecessors, 5G networks are cellular networks, in which the service area is divided into small geographical areas called cells.
- All 5G wireless devices in a cell are connected to the Internet and telephone network by radio waves through a local antenna in the cell.
- The main advantage of the new networks is that they will have greater bandwidth, giving higher download speeds, eventually up to 10 gigabits per second (Gbit/s).
- Due to the increased bandwidth, it is expected the networks will increasingly be used as general internet service providers for laptops and desktop computers, competing with existing ISPs such as cable internet, and also will make possible new applications in internet of things (IoT) and machine to machine areas.



What are the reasons behind the trials?

- The objectives of conducting 5G trials include
 - testing 5G spectrum propagation characteristics especially in the Indian context
 - model tuning and evaluation of chosen equipment and vendors; testing of indigenous technology
 - testing of applications (such as tele-medicine, tele-education, augmented/ virtual reality, drone-based agricultural monitoring, etc.)
 - to test 5G phones and devices

Significance of the Step

- 5G technology is expected to deliver improved user experience in terms of data download rates (expected to be 10 times that of 4G), up to three times greater spectrum efficiency, and ultra low latency to enable Industry 4.0.
- Applications are across a wide range of sectors such as agriculture, education, health, transport, traffic management, smart cities, smart homes, and multiple applications of IOT (Internet of Things).

12

National Telemedicine Service (e-Sanjeevani)

CONTEXT:

- More than Half a Crore patients served by the National Telemedicine Service (eSanjeevani) during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

ABOUT:

- eSanjeevani AB-HWC - the doctor to doctor telemedicine platform- is being implemented at all the Health and Wellness Centres in the country in hub and spoke model under **Ayushman Bharat Scheme** of Government of India.
- This modality of digital health enables delivery of health services to the citizens in the confines of their homes.
- eSanjeevani has been performing as a parallel stream of country's healthcare delivery system that is already over-burdened.

- Patient to Doctor remote consultation services were rolled out by the Union Ministry in April 2020 while the OPDs in the country were closed during first lockdown.

Ayushman Bharat

- ▶ Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana of the Government of India aims to provide free access to healthcare for 50 crore people in the country.
- ▶ People using the program access their own primary care services from a family doctor.
- ▶ When anyone needs additional care, then PM-JAY provides free secondary health care for those needing specialist treatment and tertiary health care for those requiring hospitalization.
- ▶ The programme is part of the Indian government's National Health Policy and is means-tested.
- ▶ It was launched in September 2018 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. That ministry later established the **National Health Authority** as an organization to administer the program.
- ▶ It is a centrally sponsored scheme and is jointly funded by both the federal government and the states.
- ▶ By offering services to 50 crore (500 million) people it is the world's largest government sponsored healthcare program. The program is a means-tested as its users are people with low income in India.

13 Mucormycosis- fungal infection

CONTEXT:

- Mucormycosis, a Fungal Complication being detected in COVID-19 Patients.

ABOUT:

- Mucormycosis, colloquially known as black fungus, is an infection from the mucormycetes group of fungi.
- It is abundantly found in natural environments, especially in soil.
- Though rare, this infection has been around for decades, but only impacts those with health conditions and significantly weakened immune systems because of the use of steroids.
- The rising cases of mucormycosis in Covid-19 patients are prevalent largely because of the increased use of steroids like dexamethasone, especially among diabetics.
- Not everyone is predisposed to the black fungus disease, but unchecked and unsupervised use of steroid therapies can often make matters worse even for non-risk patients.
- While it is not classified as an outbreak yet, the Indian Council for Medical Research, the government's main research organisation, has released a set of guidelines to spot and treat mucormycosis.

Fungal infection:

- ▶ Fungal infections can affect anyone, and they can appear on several parts of the body. A jock with athlete's foot, a baby with thrush, and a woman with a yeast infection are just a few examples.

- ▶ Fungi are microorganisms characterized by a substance in their cell walls called chitin. Some fungi, like many types of mushrooms, are edible. Other types of fungi, like aspergillus, can be extremely dangerous and lead to life-threatening diseases.
- ▶ Different types of fungi can cause fungal infections. In some cases, fungi that aren't typically found on or inside your body can colonize it and cause an infection.
- ▶ In other cases, fungi that are normally present on or inside your body can multiply out of control and cause an infection.
- ▶ Fungal infections can be contagious. They can spread from one person to another. In some cases, you can also catch disease-causing fungi from infected animals or contaminated soil or surfaces.

14 Women military police

CONTEXT:

- Indian Army gets its first batch of 83 women soldiers, in the Corps of Military Police.

ABOUT:

- The induction of women soldiers, initially announced in January 2019, aims to enhance the representation of women in the three services.
- Hitherto, women were only allowed to join the Army as officers in the medical, legal, education, signals, and engineering corps.
- These jawans will be posted in Army units across the country in the rank of Lance Naik.
- These jawans, like their male counterparts, can utilise the Combined Defence Services examination as a possible pathway to secure an officer's commission.

Corps of Military Police (CMP)

- ▶ The Corps of Military Police traces its origin to the days preceding World War II.
- ▶ Corps of Military Police (CMP) is the military police of the Indian Army.
- ▶ In addition, the CMP is trained to handle prisoners of war and to regulate traffic, as well as to handle basic telecommunication equipment such as telephone exchanges.



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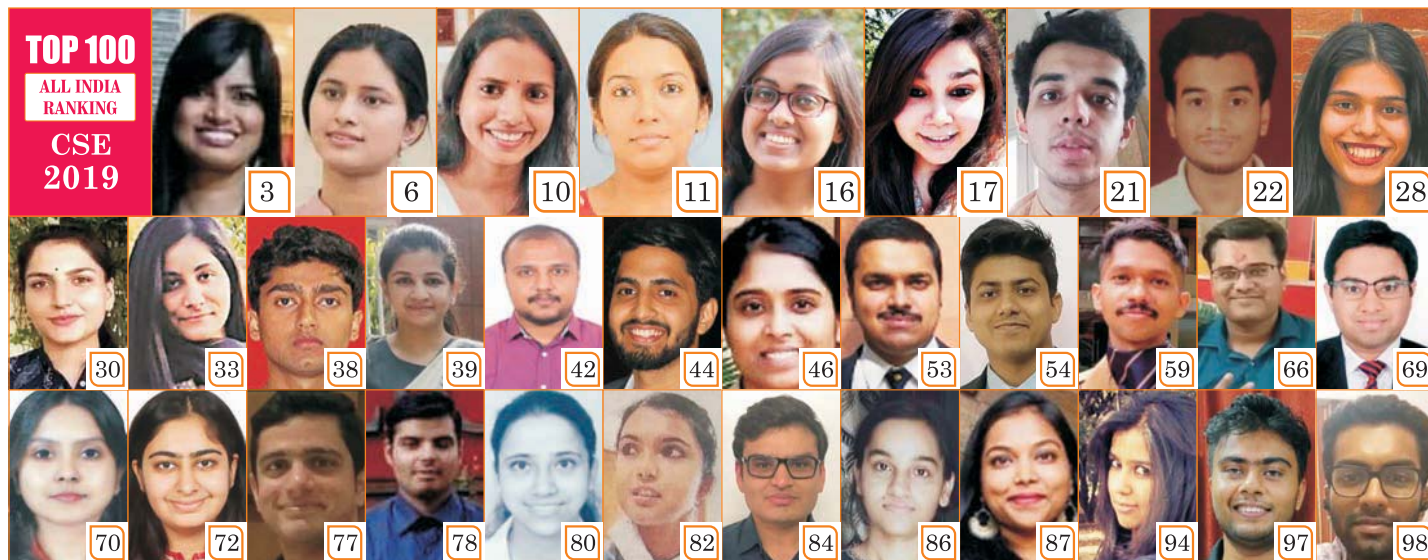
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