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MK Yadav Sir

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DRUG DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AI

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

The use of AI in drug development

What are target proteins and how are they identified? How do AI-based tools AlphaFold 3 and RoseTTAFold All-Atom help in predicting the correct target protein and its interactions with drugs? Where does India stand in the field of computational drug development?

EXPLAINER

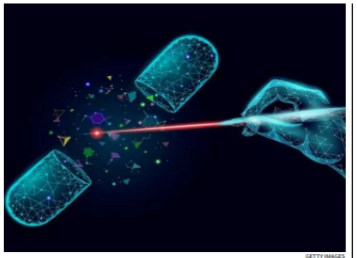
Binay Panda

Drug development is an expensive and time-consuming process. However, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has opened up a world of possibilities with respect to fast-tracking drug development.

How does the process start?

The process of developing a drug starts with identifying and validating a target. A target is a biological molecule (usually a gene or a protein) to which a drug directly binds in order to work. The overwhelming majority of targets are proteins. Only those proteins with ideal sites where drugs can go and dock to do their business are druggable proteins.

Target proteins are identified in the discovery phase, wherein a target protein sequence is fed into a computer which looks for the best-fitting drug out of millions in the library of small molecules for which the structures are stored in the computer. The process assumes that the structures of the target protein and drug are known. If not, the computer uses models to understand the sites where a drug can bind. This discovery process avoids time-consuming laboratory experiments that require expensive chemicals and reagents and have a high failure rate. Once the suitable protein target and its drug are identified, the research moves to the pre-clinical phase, where the potential drug candidates are tested outside a biological system, using cells and animals for the drug's safety and toxicity. After this, as part of the clinical phase, the drug is tested on a small number of human patients before being used on more patients for efficacy and safety. Finally, the drug undergoes regulatory approval and marketing and post-market survey phases. Due to a high failure rate, the discovery phase limits the number of drugs that pass and carry on to the pre-clinical and clinical phases.



GETTY IMAGES

How can AI help this process?

AI has the potential to revolutionise target discovery and understand drug-target interaction by drastically cutting down time, increasing the accuracy of prediction of interaction between a drug and its target, and saving money. The development of two AI-based prediction tools, AlphaFold and RoseTTAFold, developed by researchers at DeepMind, a Google company, and the University of Washington, U.S., respectively, has provided a major scientific breakthrough in the last four years in the area of computational drug development. Both tools are based on deep neural networks. The tools' neural networks use massive amounts of input data to produce the desired output – the three-dimensional structures of proteins. Published recently, the new avatars of AlphaFold and RoseTTAFold, called AlphaFold 3 (developed jointly by Isomorphic Labs, a DeepMind spinoff) and RoseTTAFold All-Atom, respectively, take the capability of these tools to an entirely new level. The significant difference between the upgraded versions and their previous forms is their capability to predict not just static structures of proteins and protein-protein interactions but also their ability to predict structures and interactions for any combination of protein, DNA, and RNA, including modifications, small molecules and ions. Additionally, the new versions use generative diffusion-based architectures (one kind of AI model) to predict structural complexes. In a test with 400 interactions between targets and their small molecule drugs, AlphaFold 3 accurately predicted their interactions 76% of the time versus 40% by RoseTTAFold All-Atom.

What are the drawbacks?

With all the promise and potential in drug development, AI tools have limitations. For example, the tools can, at best, provide up to 80% accuracy in predicting interactions (the accuracy comes down drastically for protein-RNA interaction predictions). Second, the tools can only aid a single phase of drug development, target discovery and drug-target interaction. It will still have to go through the pre-clinical and clinical development phases, and there is no guarantee that the AI-derived molecules will result in success in those phases. Third, one of the challenges with diffusion-based architecture is model hallucinations, where insufficient training data causes the tool to produce incorrect or non-existent predictions. Finally, unlike the previous versions of AlphaFold, DeepMind has not released the code for AlphaFold 3, restricting its independent verification, broad utilisation and use for protein-small molecule interaction studies.

What about India?

Developing new AI tools for drug development requires large-scale computing infrastructure, especially ones with fast Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) to run multiple tasks with longer sequences. GPU chips are expensive, and with newer and faster ones being produced by hardware makers every year, they have a quick expiration date. India needs such large-scale computing infrastructure. That, along with a lack of skilled AI scientists, unlike in the U.S. and China, is the second reason why researchers in India could not establish a first-mover advantage in developing AI tools for drug development despite the country having a rich history in protein X-ray crystallography, modelling and other fields of structural biology. However, with a growing number of pharmaceutical organisations, India can lead the way in applying AI tools in target discovery, identification, and drug testing.

Binay Panda is Professor at JNU, New Delhi and posts at @gamifaln.

THE GIST

- The process of developing a drug starts with identifying and validating a target. A target is a biological molecule (usually a gene or a protein) to which a drug directly binds in order to work.
- AI has the potential to revolutionise target discovery and understand drug-target interaction by drastically cutting down time, increasing the accuracy of prediction of interaction between a drug and its target, and saving money.
- The development of two AI-based prediction tools, AlphaFold and RoseTTAFold, developed by researchers at DeepMind, a Google company, and the University of Washington, U.S., respectively, has provided a major scientific breakthrough in the area of computational drug development.

Advantages

- AI accelerates target discovery by reducing time through efficient prediction algorithms.
- AI improves drug-target interaction understanding by enhancing prediction accuracy.
- It offers cost-saving benefits by streamlining the drug development process
- It refines the understanding of how drugs interact with their molecular targets, aiding in drug development.
- AlphaFold and RoseTTAFold, based on deep neural networks, revolutionize computational drug development.
- These tools leverage massive data inputs to accurately predict three-dimensional protein structures, facilitating drug design.

Context: Drug developers are seeking to speed up the testing and developing of new drugs with the help of artificial intelligence (AI).

Drug Development

- **About**: It is an expensive and time-consuming process. However, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has opened up a world of possibilities with respect to fast-tracking drug development.
- **Process of Developing Drug**:
  - **Identifying and Validating the Target**: The process begins with identifying and validating a target, typically a protein, which the drug directly binds to for its intended effect.
  - **Discovery Phase**: In the discovery phase, target protein sequences are analyzed using computer algorithms to find suitable drug molecules from a library of small molecules.
  - **Analysis:** Computational models are utilized to understand the binding sites between the target protein and potential drug molecules, streamlining the process and reducing reliance on expensive laboratory experiments.
  - **Clinical Trials:** Following pre-clinical testing, the drug undergoes clinical trials where it is administered to a small number of human patients to evaluate efficacy and safety.
  - **Clinical trails in India:** The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) is an official of the CDSCO who is the final regulatory authority for the approval of clinical trials in the country.
  - **Post-market Surveillance**: Even after approval and marketing, the drug continues to be monitored through post-market surveillance to ensure its safety and effectiveness in real-world settings.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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ARTICLE 300A

(Syllabus GS Paper 2 – Polity)

Acquisition of pvt property not valid if proper procedure not followed, says SC

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE PROCEDURE prescribed for acquiring private property is part of the Right to Property under Article 300A of the Constitution and any acquisition done without following it would be outside the authority of law, the Supreme Court ruled Thursday.

Upholding a Calcutta High Court Division Bench order, rejecting the Kolkata Municipal Corporation's decision to acquire a piece of private land, an SC bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Aravind Kumar said there are seven basic procedural rights that Article 300A confers on a landowner and which need to be complied with before a valid acquisition.

They are: "duty of the State to inform the person that it intends to acquire his property — right to notice, duty to hear the objections to acquisition — right to be heard, duty to inform the person of its decision to acquire — right to a reasoned decision, duty to demonstrate that the acquisition is for public purpose — acquisition only for public purpose, duty to restitute and rehabilitate — right to fair compensation, duty to conduct the process of acquisition efficiently and within prescribed timelines of the proceedings — right to an efficient conduct, and final conclusion of the proceedings leading to vesting – the right of conclusion".

Writing for the Bench, Justice Narasimha said, "The seven steps may be procedures but they do constitute the real content of the right to property under Article 300A, non-compliance of these procedures will amount to violation of the right. An action of acquiring property without following due procedure would be outside the authority of law."

The ruling said the requirement of a "law" does not end with the mere presence of a legislation which empowers the State to deprive a person of his property. "Rather, the nature, characteristics, provisions and procedure provided in such a legislation must necessarily be considered."

It said "the State must mandatorily comply with the procedure which has been provided under the statute for an acquisition to be valid under Article 300A". The court added that "the existence of and adherence to procedural safeguards is crucial for the protection of the right to property as they ensure fairness, transparency, natural justice and non-arbitrary exercise of power in the process of acquisition".

In 2009, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation attempted to "forcefully enter and occupy" a property belonging to Birinchi Bihari Shah in Narkeldanga North Road, forcing him to approach the HC. The court disposed of the petition, directing the Corporation to hold an enquiry into the encroachments and to not do any construction over the property.

A year later, Shah again approached the HC after the Corporation deleted his name from the category of owner and inserted the name of the corporation in the official records.

In January 2015, a single-judge bench of the HC disposed of the plea, restraining the Corporation from interfering with the possession of Shah and also injuncting it from giving effect to the "wrongful recording of its name in the official records". The Corporation was also directed to remove its men and material from the property within two weeks from the date of the order.

Supreme Court Rulings:

- The court emphasized that procedural justice under Article 300A is vital for the state's acquisition of private property.
- Acquiring property for public purposes requires fair compensation and strict adherence to procedural safeguards.
- The authority of law includes not just eminent domain but also the procedural fairness to ensure transparency.
- Without proper procedures, compulsory acquisition is unconstitutional, even if compensation is provided.
- Procedural safeguards are crucial for protecting property rights, ensuring fairness, transparency, and non-arbitrary power use.

Context: The Supreme Court recently ruled that acquiring private property must follow the procedure prescribed under Article 300A of the Constitution; any acquisition without it is beyond legal authority.

Article 300A of the Indian Constitution

- **About:** No person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law".
- **Original Status**: Originally, Part III of the COI established the right to property as one of the fundamental rights.
- Presently, it is not a fundamental right, but rather a legal right.... Read more at: https://www.studyiq.com/articles/right-to-property/
- **Status of Right to Property**: The Right to Property ceased to be a fundamental right with the 44th Constitution Amendment in 1978.

Landmark Judgement

- **A K Gopalan v. State of Madras (1950)**: The Madras High Court addressed the conflict between property rights and state regulatory power in this case.
  - The court upheld the constitutionality of the Madras Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1949, permitting state property acquisition.
- **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973:** Known as the "basic structure doctrine" case, it's crucial for understanding the constitutional framework.
  - The Supreme Court ruled Parliament can amend the Constitution but cannot alter its basic structure.
  - This case influenced the amendment that changed the right to property from fundamental to legal.
- **Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India (1980)**: The Supreme Court invalidated parts of the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, limiting Parliament's amendment power.
  - The court upheld the abolition of the fundamental right to property, but maintained it as a constitutional right.

WINDFALL TAX

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Centre cuts windfall tax on crude oil

India has cut the windfall tax on petroleum crude to ₹5,700 per tonne from ₹8,400 with effect from 16 May, *Reuters* reported.

As per a notification from the government on 15 May, there is no change in windfall tax for diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF), it added.

The tax is revised every two weeks, and was similarly cut on 1 May, only for petroleum crude to ₹8,400 a tonne from ₹9,600.

In April 2024, the windfall tax on petroleum crude was increased from ₹4,900 to ₹6,800 per tonne on 4 April, and further from ₹6,800 to ₹9,600 per tonne from 16 April.

And in March 2024, the tax was at ₹4,600/tonne in the first week of March, and raised mid-month to ₹4,900/tonne.

The increase in taxation manifests through imposition of a Special Additional Excise Duty on domestic crude oil producers.

JOCELYN FERNANDES & RITURAJ BARUAH

Context: India has cut the windfall tax on petroleum crude to 5,700 rupees ($68.34) per metric ton from 8,400 rupees with effect from May 16.

Windfall Tax

- **About**: The **purpose of a windfall tax is to impose additional taxes** on a company's profits generated from an external event, often unexpected, such as the increase in energy prices due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- According to the United States Congressional Research Service, **a windfall is defined as an increase in income that is neither earned nor anticipated**, and it does not result from any extra effort or expenses on the part of the entity.
- These **profits cannot be attributed to the company's intentional actions**, such as an investment strategy or business expansion.
- Governments typically **impose a retroactive one-time tax, known as a windfall tax**, on such profits, in addition to the regular tax rates.

The Reason for Implementing a Windfall Tax

- It is introduced to finance social welfare initiatives.
- It serves as an additional source of income for the government.
- It functions as a means for the central authority to reduce the nation's expanded trade deficit.

Other Key Terms:

- **Tax Buoyancy:** It serves as an indicator used to gauge the effectiveness and adaptability of revenue collection in correlation with the expansion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or National Income.
- **Tax Elasticity**: It Tax elasticity means how much tax revenue changes when tax rates change. It shows how a higher tax rate affects the total tax amount collected.
- **Angel Tax**: An income tax levied, when an unlisted company issues shares to an investor at a price higher than its fair market value.

Weather-related disasters continue to displace more than conflict and violence

Context: According to the recently released Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 (GRID-2024), the number of internally displaced people surged to 75.9 million in 2023, up from 71.1 million the previous year.

Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024

- **About:** It is an annual publication by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) based in Geneva.
  - Each year, the report outlines the most significant internal displacement situations worldwide.
  - The GRID includes comprehensive data on the total cumulative numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally.
- **Internal Displacement**: It refers to people forced from homes but remain within their country.
- **Causes**: Conflict, violence, and development projects displace millions yearly.
- **Characteristics**: Displaced individuals face insecurity, lack of shelter, and uncertain futures.

Highlights of the Report

- **IDP Increase:** The number of internally displaced people (IDP) surged to 75.9 million in 2023, up from 71.1 million the previous year.
- **Displacement Causes**: 7.7 million individuals were displaced by disasters, with earthquakes accounting for one-fourth of this figure, while 68.3 million were displaced due to conflict and violence.
- **Top Hosts**: Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Colombia, and Yemen collectively shelter nearly half of the world's IDPs.
  - Sudan's Predicament: Sudan leads with 1 million IDPs, marking the highest number for a single country.
- **Hotspots of Displacement:** Sudan, the Palestinian territories, and the Democratic Republic of Congo experienced the bulk of new displacement in 2023, constituting almost two-thirds of the total.
- **South Asia:** Around 3 million individuals in South Asia lived in internal displacement due to conflict and violence by the end of 2023, with Afghanistan hosting 80 percent of them.
- **Conflict Triggers**: South Asia saw 69,000 displacements triggered by conflict and violence in 2023, with Manipur alone accounting for 67,000, marking the highest since 2018 for India.
- **Natural Disaster Decline**: India witnessed a significant drop in natural disaster-induced internal displacements, with figures decreasing from 2.5 million in 2022 to 528,000 in 2023.

INDIAN EXPRESS Page 8

DRAFT DIGITAL COMPETITION BILL

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Draft Digital Competition Bill, and why Big Tech opposes it

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE LAST date for public comments on the draft Digital Competition Bill, 2024 passed on Wednesday.

Taking a leaf out of the European regulatory handbook, the Bill contains provisions which could stop tech giants from self-preferencing their own services and using data gathered from one company to benefit another group company. It also sets presumptive norms to curb anti-competitive practices before they actually take place, with heavy penalties — to the tune of billions of dollars — for violations.

Key provisions

Predictive regulation

Currently, India follows an *ex post facto* antitrust framework, regulating for market abuse after it takes place, under the Competition Act, 2002. One of the biggest criticisms of this has been that regulating after the incidence of market abuse is simply too delayed — by the time the offending company has been penalised, market dynamics change to the detriment of smaller competitors. The draft Bill contains provisions to change this with an *ex ante* framework instead, which foresees potential harms that can arise out of antitrust issues and prescribes pre-determined no-go areas. Due to the complex world of digital markets, which are ever-growing with increasing interlinkages between various offerings made by a single company, a forward-looking, preventive, and presumptive law is crucial to curb anti-competitive practices in the space.

Significant entities

The Bill proposes that for certain "core digital services" like search engines and social media sites, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) should designate companies as "Systematically Significant Digital Enterprise (SSDE)" depending on various quantitative and qualitative parameters. These include:

- If in the last three financial years, its turnover in India is not less than Rs 4,000 crore; or its global turnover is not less than $30 billion; or,
- Its gross merchandise value in India is not less than Rs 16,000 crore; or,
- Its global market capitalisation is not less than $75 billion; or,
- The core digital service provided by these companies should also have at least 1 crore end users, or 10,000 business users.

The CCI also has discretionary powers to designate entities not falling under these parameters as SSDEs, if it believes that they have a significant presence in any given core digital service. SSDES will be prohibited from engaging in practices such as self-preferencing, anti-steering, and restricting third party applications. If they violate these requirements, they can be fined up to 10% of their global turnover.

EXPLAINED POLICY

Associate Digital Enterprises

Understanding the role that data collected by one company of a major technology group can play in benefitting other group companies, the Bill proposes to designate associate digital enterprises (ADEs). ADEs would have the same obligations as SSDEs, depending on the level of their involvement with the core digital service offered by the main company. For instance, Google Maps or YouTube can be, in theory, designated as ADEs of Google Search depending on the level of data-sharing between these entities and Google Search.

Criticism from Big Tech

Naturally, there has been significant resistance to this Bill in its current form, from big tech companies, industry bodies funded by tech companies, and boutique consultancies hoping to onboard tech clients.

For Big Tech, an *ex ante* framework with strict prescriptive norms could lead to a significant compliance burden, and shift focus from innovation and research to ensuring that companies do not presumptively engage in any anti-competitive practice. As a result, the tech giants are calling for the current competition law to be strengthened rather than moving towards an *ex ante* framework.

An industry executive told *The Indian Express* that because of the stringent requirements of the European Union's Digital Markets Act, which came into force fully earlier this year, there has been an increase of 4,000% in the time it takes to find things via Google search. India's new regulatory framework can lead to similar outcomes, tech executives fear.

Moreover, if the law were to go into effect as is, a company like Apple would have to allow iPhone users to download apps from a third-party app store, over Apple's own store — something that the company has lobbied against vehemently. While Android has a relatively open nature 'sideloading' of apps, Google too has advocated against this, primarily citing potential security ramifications of allowing third party downloads.

Companies are also understood to be concerned about the broad definition — both quantitative and qualitative — of who an SSDE could be. Unlike the EU's DMA which specifically names the 'gatekeeper' entities, in India's case, CCI's discretion will prevail, something that companies believe could lead to arbitrary decision making that could also potentially impact start-ups. Big Tech companies are claiming that cutting down on data-sharing could also impact smaller businesses who rely on their platforms to reach a big target audience.

Need for digital competition

The law comes on the back of Big Tech's long history of anti-competitive offences. Only last year, Google was fined Rs 1,337 crore by the CCI for its anti-competitive conduct in the Android ecosystem. Moreover, in the last decade or so, most tech-related innovation has come from within the stables of a handful of American Big Tech giants like Google, Apple, Amazon, and Meta.

Officials believe that this is due to the high market barriers for new entrants in the sector. In the online space, once a company corners a significant portion of the market, their product becomes the default way to access that particular service, with rivals finding it increasingly difficult to challenge their dominance.

Take, for instance WhatsApp, which is owned by Meta, Facebook's parent company. In India, it has a market share of more than 97% among messaging app users — it is pretty much the default messaging app everyone is expected to use. While there is always space for niche online products — users who care about their privacy may choose Signal over WhatsApp, and a search engine like DuckDuckGo over Google Search — they do not become the norm.

While smaller companies did benefit from the cheap advertising that Google and Facebook provided them when compared to traditional media, this has also fuelled a surveillance-based digital advertising industry, which is always making inferences about users behind the scenes and across platforms they access. Government officials believe all these cons will be better addressed via the *ex ante* framework proposed by the draft Bill.

Context: Nearly 40 Indian startups have joined forces to pledge support to the draft digital competition bill, describing its proposed 'ex-ante' regulations as potential 'game-changer' in tackling the anti-competitive practices of big tech companies.

Key Proposals of the Draft Digital Competition Bill

- **Predictive regulation**: The bill aims to establish a regulatory framework to ensure fair competition, protect consumer interests, and prevent market monopolization by large digital enterprises.
- **Designation of Systematically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs)**: The proposed legislation suggests the Competition Commission of India (CCI) designate certain companies as "Systematically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs)" based on specific criteria such as turnover, size, user base, and market power.
  - **Self-Reporting Regime**: The bill introduces a self-reporting mechanism for companies engaged in "core digital services" to determine their designation as Systematically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs).
  - **Quantitative Criteria**: If in the last 3 financial years, its turnover in India is not less than Rs 4,000 crore; or its global turnover is not less than $30 billion; or
    - ✓ Its gross merchandise value in India is not less than Rs 16,000 crore; or
    - ✓ Its global market capitalisation is not less than $75 billion; or
    - ✓ The core digital service provided by these companies should also have at least 1 crore end users, or 10,000 business users.
- **Associate Digital Enterprises**: SSDEs will be prohibited from engaging in practices like self-preferencing, anti-steering, and restricting third-party applications for identified services.
  - ADES would have the same obligations as SSDES, depending on the level of their involvement with the core digital service offered by the main company.

Criticism of the Bill

- **Opposition to the Bill:** Resistance to the current draft comes from tech-funded industry bodies and consultancies.
- **Concerns of Big Tech**: An ex ante framework could burden tech giants with compliance, diverting focus from innovation.
- **Preference for Strengthening Existing Laws**: Tech giants advocate bolstering competition laws over adopting an ex ante framework.
- **Impact on Apple**: Implementation would require Apple to permit third-party app downloads, a move it opposes.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

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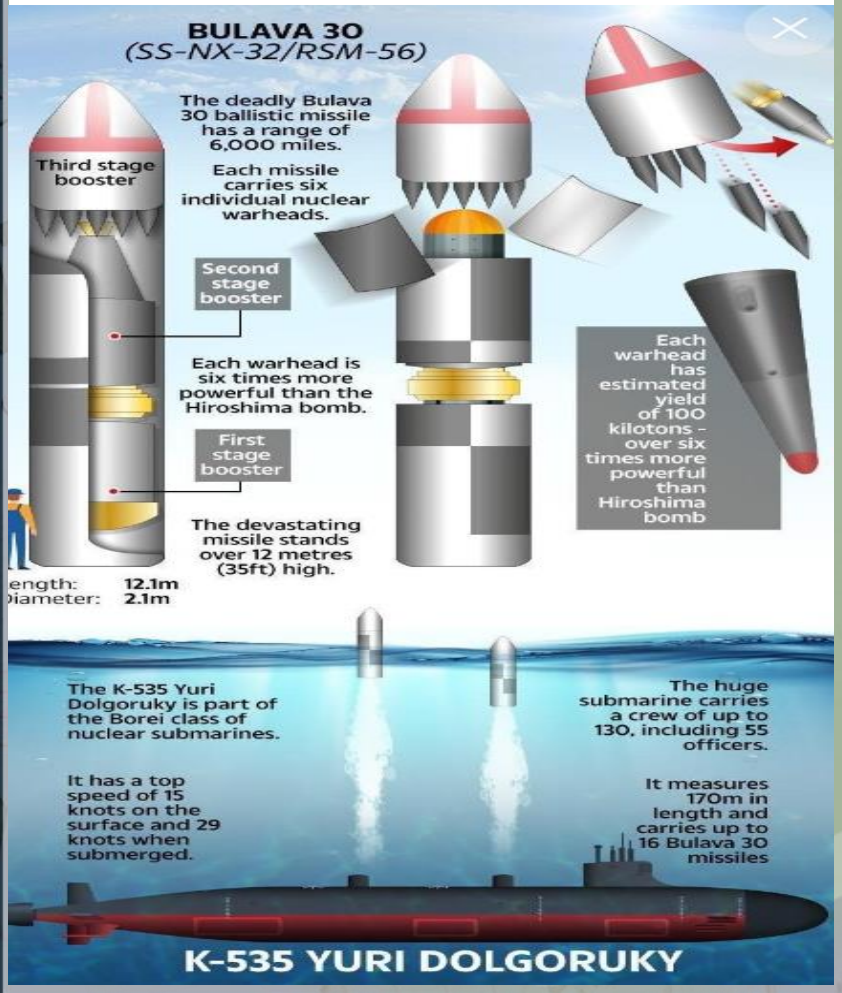
BULAVA MISSILE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Putin Adds New Nuclear Missile To Russia's Arsenal: How Deadly Is Bulava Submarine-Launched ICBM?



Context: Russian President has bolstered the country's military capabilities by ordering the addition of a new nuclear-capable missile known as the Bulava into the Russian military arsenal.

Bulava Missile

- **About:** The RSM-56 Bulava, known as SS-N-32 in NATO reporting, is a Russian submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).
- **Development:** Designed by the Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology, its development began in the late 1990s, primarily for deployment on Russia's Borei-class submarines.
- **Role in Strategic Nuclear Force**: Bulava constitutes a fundamental element of Russia's future strategic nuclear force, ensuring its potency and relevance.
- **Features:**
  - **Propulsion**: It operates on a three-stage solid-propellant system, ensuring reliable and consistent performance.
  - **Dimensions**: With a launch mass of approximately 8 tonnes, it spans 12.1 meters in length within its launch container and has a diameter of 2 meters.
  - **Range and Payload:** Bulava boasts a maximum range of 8,300 km (5,160 miles) and a payload capacity of up to 10 multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs).
  - **Maneuverability and Accuracy**: Its re-entry vehicles (RVs) possess in-flight maneuverability, enabling them to evade enemy defenses, with an expected accuracy of 250 to 300 meters.

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ECI POWER TO DE-REGISTER A PARTY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2– Polity)

Can parties be de-recognised or de-registered?

Does the Election Commission have the power to de-recognise a political party for violation of the MCC?

Rangarajan. R

The story so far:

The Election Commission of India (ECI) in its report on enforcement of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) has stated that it expects star campaigners to lead by example and not vitiate the fabric of society. This has raised a debate about ECI powers to rein in MCC violations.

What are registered parties?

Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) lays down the requirements for registration of a political party with the ECI. Any political party that seeks registration should submit a copy of its memorandum/constitution. Such document should declare that the party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India. It should also bear allegiance to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy, and uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. Registered political parties enjoy the following legal benefits – (a) tax exemption for donations received under Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961, (b) common symbol for contesting general elections to the Lok Sabha/State Assemblies, and (c) twenty 'star campaigners' during election campaign. As per the ECI, there are 2,790 active registered political parties in India.

What are recognised parties?

A registered party is referred to as a Registered Unrecognised Political Party (RUPP). Political parties are recognised as a 'national' or 'State' party under the provisions of The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 (Symbols Order) by the ECI. The criteria for recognition at the 'national' or 'State' level consists of winning requisite number of seats and/or obtaining required percentage of votes in a general election to Lok Sabha or State Assembly. At present, there are six 'national' parties, and sixty-one 'State' parties that have been recognised. These recognised parties enjoy additional concessions of having a reserved symbol during elections and forty 'star campaigners'.

What are the issues?

It has been noticed that less than a third of RUPPs contest elections. The RP Act does not confer explicit powers on the ECI to de-register any political party if it fails to contest elections, conduct inner-party elections or lodge requisite returns. The Supreme Court in *Indian National Congress versus Institute of Social Welfare & Ors* (2002) had held that the ECI does not have power to de-register any political party under the RP Act. It may de-register only under exceptional circumstances like registration being obtained by fraud or the political party ceasing to have allegiance to the Constitution or if it is declared unlawful by the Government. The RUPPs that don't contest elections raise concerns over the possible misuse of income tax exemption and donations collected being used for money laundering.

Context: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has raised the issue of following Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by political parties and hence the power of the ECO to de-register or de-recognise the parties.

Model Code of Conduct

- **About:** It is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India.
- **Scope of the Guidelines**: The guidelines encompass various aspects including speeches, polling day, polling booths, portfolios, election manifestos, processions, and candidate conduct.
- **Objective**: The primary goal of the MCC is to ensure orderly, transparent, and peaceful campaigning, polling, and counting processes.

Registered Parties and power of ECI to de-register or de-recognise:

- **About**: These are political entities officially recognized and authorized by the Election Commission of India (ECI) under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act).
- **Requirements for Registration**: To be registered, a political party must submit a copy of its memorandum/constitution to the ECI, declaring allegiance to the Constitution of India and principles such as socialism, secularism, and democracy.
  - It must also uphold the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.
- **Legal Benefits**: Registered political parties enjoy several legal benefits, including tax exemption for donations under Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961, the privilege of using a common symbol for contesting general elections to the Lok Sabha/State Assemblies, and the entitlement to designate twenty 'star campaigners' during election campaigns.
- **Number of Registered Parties**: According to the Election Commission of India (ECI), there are currently 2,790 active registered political parties in India.
- **Supreme Court Observation:** In **Indian National Congress versus Institute of Social Welfare & Ors (2002)** had held that the ECI does not have power to de-register any political party under the RP Act.
  - It may de-register only under exceptional circumstances like registration being obtained by fraud or the political party ceasing to have allegiance to the Constitution or if it is declared unlawful by the Government.
- **ECI and Law Commission's recommendations:** ECI in its memorandum for electoral reforms (2016) has suggested amendment to the law that would empower the ECI to deregister a party.
  - The **Law Commission in its 255th report (2015)** on 'Electoral reforms' has also recommended amendments for de-registration of a political party if it fails to contest elections for 10 consecutive years. These recommendations should be implemented.

PIB May 16

ZIMBABWE
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

3rd Session of India-Zimbabwe Joint Trade Committee held in New Delhi

Context: The 3rd session of the India-Zimbabwe Joint Trade Committee recently convened in New Delhi.

Zimbabwe

- **Location**: It is situated in Central Southern Africa, nestled between the Limpopo and the Zambezi rivers.
- **Capital:** Harare
- **Bordering countries**: Being landlocked, Zimbabwe is bordered by Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana.
- **Mountain**: Mount Nyangani, towering at 2,592 meters, marks the highest point in Zimbabwe, tracing its eastern border with Mozambique.
- **River:** Save river, and Zambezi River
    - The Zambezi is the fourth-longest river in Africa, the longest east-flowing river in Africa, and the largest flowing into the Indian Ocean from Africa.
- **Water Bodies:** Lake Kariba
    - Victoria Falls is part of the mighty Zambezi River, which forms the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia.

LIVEMINT Page 9

COVAXIN
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Covaxin has adverse impact: study

Almost one-third of those who underwent the study's exam reported having an AESI. HT

A new study conducted by the researchers at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) found that over one-third of recipients of Bharat Biotech's anti-Covid vaccination, Covaxin, reported "adverse events of special interest," or AESI, at the long-term consequences of the vaccine.

Almost one-third of the 926 individuals who underwent the study's examination reported having an AESI, with viral upper respiratory tract infections being the most frequent symptom. In one percent of cases, serious AESI including stroke and Guillain-Barre syndrome were documented, the study found.

However, reacting to the study, Bharat Biotech on Thursday said that several studies have been executed on the safety of Covaxin, and published in peer reviewed journals, demonstrating an excellent safety track record and for such a study in safety to be effective, informative and to avoid investigator bias, a lot of points has to be considered.

Nearly 50% of 926 study participants in the study complained of infections during the follow-up period, predominated by viral upper respiratory tract infections. SOMRITA GHOSH

Context: Researchers at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) recently found that nearly one-third of individuals who received Bharat Biotech's Covaxin reported 'adverse events of special interest' (AESI).

Covaxin

- **About**: It is produced by Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology, Pune.
- **Constituents and Action**:
  - It is an inactivated vaccine developed by inactivating (killing) the live microorganisms responsible for the disease.
  - This process destroys the pathogen's ability to replicate while preserving its structure, enabling the immune system to recognize it and mount an immune response.

Adverse Events of Special Interest

- **About**: It is one of scientific and medical concern specific to the sponsor's product or program.
- **Monitoring and Communication**: Ongoing monitoring and rapid communication by the investigator to the sponsor may be appropriate for an AESI.
- **Need for Further Investigation**: Such an event might warrant further investigation to characterize and understand it.
- **Rapid Communication to Regulators**: Depending on the nature of the event, rapid communication by the trial sponsor to other parties, such as regulators, might also be warranted.

Key Findings of Report

- Approximately 33% of participants reported AESI, with skin and subcutaneous disorders (10.5%) being the most common in adolescents.
- General disorders (10.2%) and nervous system disorders (4.7%) were also common AESIs among adolescent participants.
- In adults, common AESIs included general disorders (8.9%), musculoskeletal disorders (5.8%), and nervous system disorders (5.5%).
- Serious AESIs, such as stroke and Guillain-Barre syndrome, were reported by 1% of participants.
- Nearly 50% of the 926 participants experienced infections, primarily viral upper respiratory tract infections, during the follow-up period.
- The study emphasized the need for extended surveillance to understand AESIs' long-term outcomes and called for larger studies on immune-mediated phenomena post-COVID-19 vaccination.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Internal Security)

ED can't make PMLA arrest after cognisance, needs court nod: SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE SUPREME Court ruled Thursday that the Enforcement Directorate cannot directly arrest a person under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) once a special court takes cognisance of its complaint and the agency will have to approach the court if it wants custody of that person.

The bench of Justices A S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan, which was hearing Tarsem Lal vs Directorate of Enforcement, Jalandhar Zonal Office, said "After cognisance is taken of the offence punishable under Section 4 of the PMLA based on a complaint under Section 44 the ED and its officers are powerless to exercise powers under Section 19 to arrest a person shown as accused in the complaint. If the ED wants custody of the accused who appears after service of summons for conducting further investigation in the same offence, ED will have to seek custody of the accused by applying to the special court."

"If the accused appears

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED

The relief this ruling provides

THE SUPREME Court's ruling extends protection against arrest by the ED when an accused is actively participating in the investigation without being evasive. The relief is significant as the bar for grant of bail, once arrested, is very high in ED cases.

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court decreed that the Enforcement Directorate is barred from directly arresting individuals under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) once a special court acknowledges its complaint, necessitating the agency to seek court custody for such individuals.

Supreme Court Ruling

- **Limitations on ED's Powers:** The Supreme Court stated that once cognizance is taken of an offense under Section 4 of the PMLA based on a complaint under Section 44, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and its officers lack the authority to exercise powers under Section 19 to arrest an accused.
- **Custody Procedure After Appearance**: If the accused appears before the special court upon receiving a summons, they need not apply for bail, but the court may direct them to furnish bonds according to Section 88 of the CrPC.
- **Special Court's Decision on Custody**: The special court, upon hearing the accused, must provide an order after recording brief reasons. Custody may be permitted only if the court is convinced that custodial interrogation is necessary, even if the accused was not previously arrested under Section 19.
- **Authority for Further Investigation:** The ED may arrest a person for further investigation regarding the same offense, even if not previously accused, provided the requirements of Section 19 are met.
- **Issuance of Warrants**: If the accused fails to appear, the special court can issue a warrant under Section 70 of the CrPC, starting with a bailable warrant. If service of a bailable warrant is not possible, non-bailable warrants can be pursued.

Important Sections

- **Section 19 of PMLA:** It allows ED officers to arrest an individual "on the basis of material in possession (and) reason to believe (to be recorded in writing) that the person is guilty.
- **Section 44**: A Special Court may, upon a complaint made by an authority authorized in this behalf under this Act take cognizance of offense under section 3, without the accused being committed to it for trial.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

- **About:** The Act was enacted in a 2002 response to India's global commitment (including the Vienna Convention) to combat the menace of money laundering.
- **Objective:** The statement of objects and reasons of the PMLA Bill of 1999 refers to various international conventions and instruments dealing primarily with money laundering related to crimes involving drugs and narcotics.
- United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.
- The Basle Statement of Principles, 1989.

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