

SMART ABHYAS

Current Affairs Monthly

August 2018

IN THIS MAGAZINE

Ease of Living
Index 2018

India now granted
STA-1 status by
the USA

Dal lake rapidly
shrinking

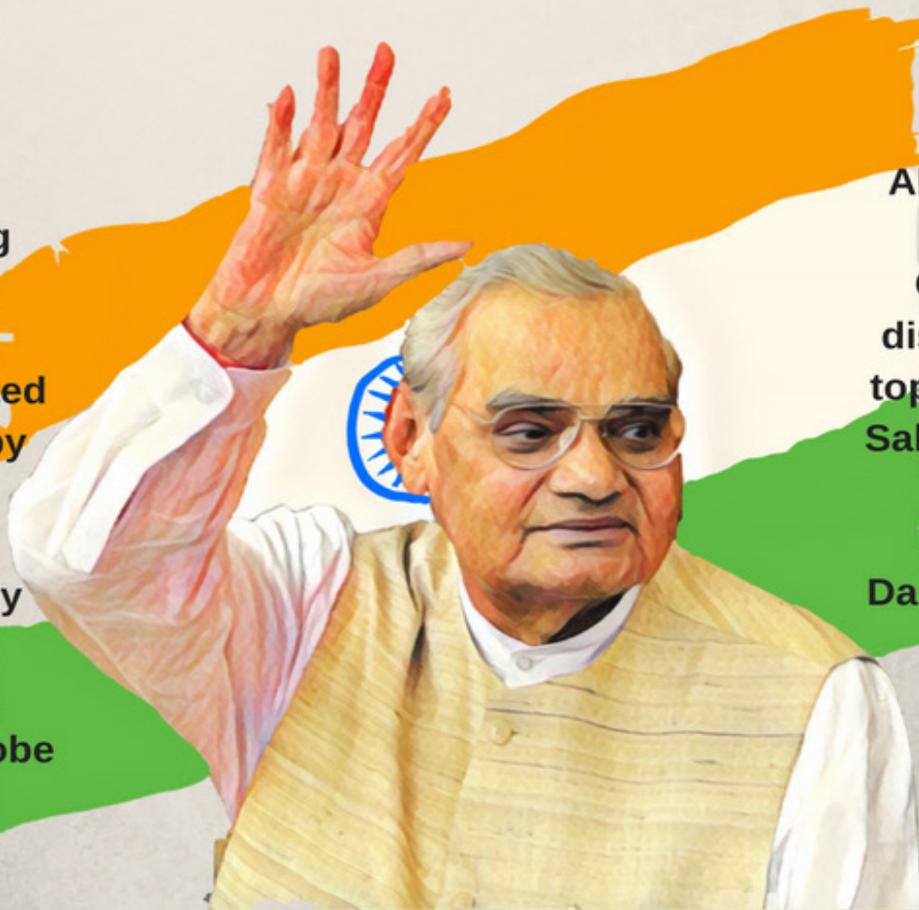
Parker Solar probe
launched

INCLUDES

All India Radio,

CSE relevant
discussions and
topics from Rajya
Sabha TV and Lok
Sabha TV

Daily Quiz August
2018



India mourns the departure of a poet, statesman par excellence and the quintessential politician....

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Smart Abhyas

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Smart Abhyas

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Polity and Social Issues

Panel to examine OBC sub-categorisation seeks extension

What is the issue ?

- The Commission to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC), headed by the former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court G Rohini, has sought a third extension till November 2018 for submission of its politically crucial report on creating quotas within quotas.

More on the issue :

- The five-member panel, constituted in October 2017, was to complete its task of sub-categorising 5000-odd castes in the central OBC list so as to ensure “more equitable distribution” of opportunities in central government jobs and educational institutions.
- Its report was to be submitted within three months. Since then, it has sought and was granted extensions twice citing the ‘voluminous’ nature of its task.
- As per the ‘final extension’ granted by the Cabinet, its report was to be submitted on July 31, 2018.

Mandate :

- The Commission was set up under Article 340 of the Constitution that was used to establish the landmark Mandal Commission more than two decades ago which recommended 27 per cent reservation for socially and educationally backward classes in higher education and government jobs.
- Over the years, with the benefits of this reservation being cornered mostly by the dominant OBC groups, the sub-categorisation panel report is expected to recommend earmarking sub-quotas for the extremely backward classes within the OBCs.
- The National Commission for Backward Classes had in 2015 noted that “unequals cannot be treated equally” and recommended that OBCs be categorised into extremely backward classes, more backward classes and backward classes.

Online shopping under the scanner

What is the issue ?

- A task force of the Commerce Ministry has submitted its recommendations on a draft national e-commerce policy.
- If accepted by the government, it could impact consumer’s online shopping experience in multiple ways.

Need for an e-commerce policy in India

- India’s e-commerce sector, currently estimated to be worth around \$25 billion, is expected to grow to \$200 billion over the next 10 years.
- Much of the growth in the sector is on account of cheaper smartphones and data tariffs, along with enhanced connectivity.
- Having covered the metros and large cities, the bigger e-commerce firms expect their next phase of growth to come from tier-II and tier-III towns, where the expansion of 3G and 4G networks have put consumers online. This is seen as resulting in job creation, productivity improvement, and increased consumer presence on online platforms.
- The task force has said that for India to fully benefit from these opportunities, it is important for policymakers to be cognizant also of the underlying challenges — which makes it imperative to have clearly laid-down rules for electronic commerce in the country.
- Many of these rules currently exist in some or the other form, and are enforced by a multiplicity of government departments and regulators.
- A national e-commerce policy will be an attempt at creating a one-stop shop for the norms and regulations under which online retailers will be covered.

About the Task force :

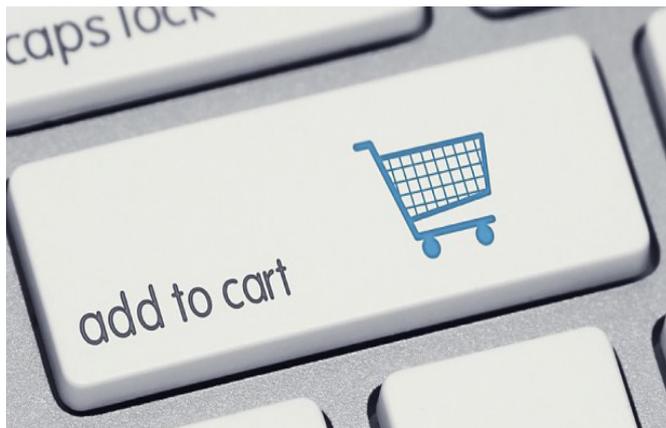
- A 70-member “think tank” was set up in April 2018, headed by Minister for Commerce and Industry Suresh Prabhu, and comprising the secretaries of ministries including Commerce, Information Technology, Communications, Consumer Affairs, etc., and various industry representatives.
- The think tank set up a task force under Commerce Secretary Rita Teotia to suggest a framework for the national policy on e-commerce.
- Now that the task force has submitted its recommendations, the think tank will work on creating a draft policy, which will be taken up by the government.

What does the task force say about the inventory model of marketplace operations?

- The government does not currently allow foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce companies that hold their own inventories.
- Online retailers with foreign investments can only operate as marketplaces, letting sellers list their products on the platform. However, given that the lion’s share of investments in e-commerce firms came from abroad, the e-tailers found a way around the government’s norm by setting up seller entities that sold their products on the platforms.
- Later, in 2016, the government mandated that no platform should have more than 25% of its sales coming from a single seller. Due to the restrictions on the inventory-based model, e-commerce companies have not been able to offer their in-house brands extensively.
- The task force has recommended that FDI may be allowed in inventory-based e-commerce companies up to 49%, with the condition that the e-tailer sells 100% Made-in-India products. This will allow e-commerce firms to offer their own brands, as long as they are made in India.
- On the other hand, for online marketplaces, the task force has suggested imposing restrictions on group companies of such platforms to prevent them from directly or indirectly influencing the prices of goods and services. The marketplaces will not be able to offer deep discounts through their in-house companies listed as sellers.

Need for a Central Consumer Protection Authority :

- There have been several incidents across the country of customers expressing dissatisfaction with products they purchased online.
- Delivery of wrong products, damaged products, exorbitant prices and delay in delivery of products are some of the issues plaguing the online platform.
- The Consumer Affairs Ministry’s National Consumer Helpline is currently the only redressal mechanism available for such grievances.
- To provide a forum for consumers, the task force has suggested the setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), which, besides helping consumers, will also act as the nodal agency for intra-government coordination, and provide a platform for e-commerce operators regarding complaints of fraudulent activities.



Will the ways in which payments are made for online purchases change?

- The task force has suggested that e-commerce platforms mandatorily provide the government’s RuPay payment option for completing payments.
- The task force has also suggested that foreign e-commerce websites should be brought on a level playing field with their Indian counterparts by making them follow the same rules for payment systems such as two-factor authentication.
- The task force has also suggested creating a fraud intelligence mechanism, using artificial intelligence-based authentication systems, for early detection of frauds.

WHO has called for a global effort against 'envenoming'

What is the issue ?

- The World Health Organisation's (WHO's) 71st World Health Assembly in Geneva adopted a resolution "to accelerate and coordinate global efforts to control snake-bite 'envenoming', the life-threatening disease that follows the bite of a venomous snake".

More on the issue :

- Between 1.8 million and 2.7 million people are bitten worldwide every year, between 81,000 and 1,38,000 of them die, and four or five times that number are disabled, according to the WHO.
- In India, which was a signatory to the resolution, some 50,000 die every year; however, the WHO fears this estimate may be just 10% of the actual burden.
- In 2017-18, 1.96 lakh cases of snakebites were recorded, with West Bengal, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu reporting the biggest numbers.
- Of the 300-odd species of snakes found in India, 52 are venomous, but all their poisons are different.

Manufacturing problems and procedural issues

- The high case burden, poorly trained doctors, and lack of anti-snake venom (ASV) makers hobble India's battle against snakebites.
- ASV manufacture requires a series of forest department permissions. Horses are needed for the test, for which a large space is necessary.
- Licensed snake catchers need clearance to trap snakes in the wild, and a separate licence is issued to keep them in captivity for 90 days.
- The snakes are "milked" every week to collect a multipurpose enzyme secreted by the animals' salivary glands.
- The diluted venom is administered to horses to immunise them; they are then bled to collect the antibodies that are generated. The plasma is separated, purified and converted into powder or liquid form to produce ASV. The manufacturing process can take a year.

Lack of research and pricing issues

- Doctors say locally produced ASVs are the most effective. A snake's venom changes with terrain, diet and environment.
- The cost of treatment in a private hospital can be huge — a Russell's viper's bite requires 30-40 vials, which could cost upwards of Rs 20,000.

The problem of untrained doctors :

- In a study of 1,686 snakebite cases from 2013-16 in Maharashtra's tribal Palghar district, researchers found poor training among doctors, and high wastage of ASV.
- In most cases, primary health centres referred patients elsewhere and the golden hour was lost.
- Doctors often miss the small mark left by the bite of a krait, the species responsible for 40% of snakebite deaths in India.

Monovalent vs polyvalent

- A monovalent ASV, made from the venom of one species, can treat the bite of only that species. It is more efficient, but the purpose is lost if the snake is not identified correctly.
- A polyvalent combines the venoms of India's four most common poisonous snakes — cobra, common krait, Russell's viper, and saw-scaled viper. More venom is wasted in the manufacture of the ASV, and more vials are required to treat the patient.
- India currently manufactures only polyvalent ASV. It needs to train doctors to identify snakes by their bites before switching to the production of monovalent ASVs.

DOs and Dont's after snake bite

DO	DONT
Immobilize the affected limb	Take the patient to snake charmer
Apply basic first aid	Suck the wound
Rush patient to nearest hospital that can deliver tetanus or anti-venom	Burn the wound
	Apply Herbal paste around the wound