

2.1.2018

CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. INDIA, PAKISTAN EXCHANGE LIST OF NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS

India and Pakistan exchanged, through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, the list of nuclear installations and facilities under a **three-decade old bilateral pact**.

- ❑ Two sides exchanged the list under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations between India and Pakistan.
- ❑ The agreement, which was signed on December 31, 1988, and entered into force on January 27, 1991, provides that the two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the pact on the first of January of every calendar year.
- ❑ This is the twenty seventh consecutive exchange of such a list between the two countries, the first one having taken place on January 1, 1992.

2. NO CHARGES ON DEBIT CARD TRANSACTIONS UP TO RS 2,000

Customers will not have to pay any transaction charges for payments through debit card, BHIM app and other payment made for up to Rs 2,000 .

Last month, Union Cabinet approved a proposal that government will bear the merchant discount rate (MDR) charges on transactions up to Rs 2,000 made through debit cards, BHIM UPI or Aadhaar-enabled payment systems to promote digital transactions. The merchant discount rate (MDR) will be borne by the government for two years with effect from January 1, 2018 by reimbursing the same to banks. Ensure easy third party motor insurance cover: IRDAI to non-life insurers

3. OIL, GAS DISCOVERY IN ARABIAN SEA

- ❑ ONGC has made a significant oil and gas discovery to the west of its prime Mumbai High fields in the Arabian Sea.
- ❑ The new find, which comes almost 50 years after ONGC began production in Mumbai High, will help the company maintain production levels from the basin for a longer time than currently estimated.
- ❑ Mumbai High is ONGC's flagship oil producing assets. It along with other small fields along the western offshore produce 16 million tonnes per annum of oil, which is 44% of India's total crude oil production of 36 million tonnes.

4. MRP, OTHER DETAILS MUST FOR ITEMS SOLD ONLINE

To protect online consumers, the centre has made it mandatory for e-commerce firms to print not only the maximum retail price (MRP) on goods but also information like expiry date and customer care details.

- ❑ The consumer affairs ministry had made the amendments in this regard to the Legal Metrology (packaged commodities) Rules in June 2017. The companies were given a six-month deadline to comply with the new rule.
- ❑ As per the amendments, goods displayed by the seller on e-commerce platform should contain declarations required under the rules. Along with MRP, the companies have to display the manufacturing date, expiry date, net quantity, country of origin and consumer care details on the label.
- ❑ Size of letters and numerals for making declaration has been increased, so that consumer can easily read the same and specific mention is made in the rules that no person should declare different MRPs (dual MRP) on an identical pre- packaged commodity.
- ❑ Besides, the government has made the net quantity checking more scientific, while bar code/QR coding has been allowed on a voluntarily basis. Medical devices, which are declared as drugs, are brought into the purview of declarations to be made under the rules.

At present, only MRP is printed on the goods sold online. The changes come in the backdrop of e-marketplaces posing new and complex consumer protection issues with the ministry receiving several complaints as regard to information deficit on online products/goods.

5. TEXT-TO-SPEECH AI SYSTEM-TACOTRON 2

- ❑ Google has developed a text-to-speech artificial intelligence (AI) system that will confuse us with its human-like articulation. The tech giant's text-to-speech system called 'Tacotron 2' delivers an AI-generated computer speech that almost matches with the voice of humans.
- ❑ The system first creates a spectrogram of the text, a visual representation of how the speech should sound. That image is put through Google's existing WaveNet algorithm, which uses the image and brings AI closer than ever to indiscernibly mimicking human speech. The algorithm can easily learn different voices and even generates artificial breaths.
- ❑ 'Tacotron 2' can detect from context the difference between the noun 'desert' and the verb 'desert,' as well as the noun 'present' and the verb 'present,' and alter its pronunciation accordingly. It can place emphasis on capitalised words and apply the proper inflection when asking a question rather than making a statement.

6. UNDERWATER SURVEILLANCE NETWORKS IN INDIAN OCEAN, SCS

China has developed a new underwater surveillance network to help its submarines get a stronger lock on targets while protecting the nation's interests along the maritime Silk Road, which included the Indian Ocean.

- ❑ The system works by gathering information about the underwater environment, particularly water temperature and salinity, which the navy can then use to more accurately track target vessels as well as improve navigation and positioning. The project is part of an unprecedented military expansion fuelled by Beijing's desire to challenge the US in the world's oceans.
- ❑ The Chinese system is based on a network of platforms-buoys, surface vessels, satellites and underwater gliders-that gather data from the South China Sea, and the Western Pacific and Indian oceans. That information is then streamed to three intelligence centres- in the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, the southern province of Guangdong, and a joint facility in South Asia- where it is processed and analysed.

7. ENSURE EASY AVAILABILITY OF INSURANCE COVER

Regulator IRDAI has asked non-life insurers to ensure easy availability of third party motor insurance cover to vehicle owners, a move that will help states in implementing the Supreme Court order on road safety.

- ❑ Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has also asked the insurers not to deny any request for third party insurance cover (Motor TP) by vehicle owners.
- ❑ The IRDAI circular follows complaints by states that cumbersome process of obtaining third party insurance is hampering implementing the apex court order.
- ❑ The Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety had directed the states and union territories to periodically carry out checks to see whether vehicle owners have third party insurance cover. The SC order further said that in case the vehicles are not covered by Motor TP, they should be detained till valid third party insurance certificate is produced by the vehicle owners.
- ❑ In order to ensure ease of obtaining motor insurance liability, Irdai said that "Insurers (non-life) shall ensure the easy availability of Motor TP Insurance and in no case can a request for a TP cover be denied". It also asked them to liaise with the police authorities to facilitate issue/renewal of third party liability policy to owners of the vehicles who are not having third party cover. The insurers have also been asked to provide facility to make available facility for obtaining online Motor.