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1. Special import policy for EV makers if they invest in India

Import at concessional duty allowed

Electric passenger car sales have been strong in India, albeit on a tiny base. The government has rolled out a policy tailored for Tesla to import 8,000 electric cars annually into India at a sharply reduced 15% duty. Analysts project that around 5% of all automobiles in India will be EVs by 2030 — up from the 2% currently, but much lower than the government's target of 30%.



Promise by Tesla of investment

Tesla setting up a manufacturing facility could be the 'Apple moment' for India's auto sector. The success of ramping up cell phone assembly by Apple suppliers in India, riding on production-linked incentives, is seen as a landmark in India's bid to move up the assembly value chain for handphones. The tariff policy break for Tesla is consistent with the government's approach to tap marquee brands and sectoral flagbearers: Apple in electronics manufacturing, Micron for semiconductor chips, and Tesla in EVs.

India's new EV policy

The Centre's new EV policy, which effectively lowered import duties to 15% from 100% on car models costing over \$35,000 if its manufacturer promised to invest \$500 million in setting up a local factory, marks a part reversal of the domestic manufacturing policy push, given that the duty cuts are aimed at enabling a carmaker to import fully built cars.

Also, the waiver is specifically for models of electric cars with combined cost, insurance, freight prices of \$35,000 or more — a landed cost of more than Rs 35 lakh, a segment that does not generally qualify for a tax sop.

While the import numbers may be limited to 8,000 units annually, the new policy does allow Tesla to test out the “market potential” before taking a full-scale plunge into manufacturing. The policy comes after the Centre turned down Tesla’s demand for upfront import duty cuts less than 24 months ago.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian express

2. Indian BrahMos missiles delivered to the Philippines: The missile’s significance

Why in News?

India’s BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles were delivered to the Philippines recently, as part of a \$375 million deal signed by the two countries in 2022.

BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited (BAPL), a joint venture company of India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), had signed a contract with the Philippines on January 28, 2022, for supply of Shore Based Anti-Ship Missile System.



How BrahMos came about

In the early 1980s, the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, conceived and led by Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, started developing a range of indigenous missiles including Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Akash and Nag, with a wide spectrum of capabilities and ranges.

In the early 1990s, India’s strategic leadership felt the need for cruise missiles — guided missiles that traverse the majority of their flight path at almost constant speed and deliver large warheads over long distances with high precision. The need was felt primarily following the use of cruise missiles in the 1991 Gulf War.

An Inter-Governmental Agreement was signed with Russia in Moscow in 1998 by Dr Kalam, who headed the DRDO, and N V Mikhailov, Russia’s then Deputy Defence Minister.

This led to the formation of BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture between DRDO and Russian Space company NPO Mashinostroyeniya (NPOM), the Indian side holding 50.5% and the Russians 49.5%. It was named after two rivers in India and Russia respectively – the Brahmaputra and the Moskva.

In 1999, work on development of missiles began in labs of DRDO and NPOM after BrahMos Aerospace received funds from the two governments. The first successful test in 2001 was conducted from a specially designed land-based launcher.

Strategic significance of BrahMos

BrahMos is a two-stage missile with a solid propellant booster engine. Its first stage brings the missile to supersonic speed (meaning faster than sound) and then gets separated. The liquid ramjet or the second stage then takes the missile closer to three times the speed of sound in cruise phase.

The missile has a very low radar signature, making it stealthy, and can achieve a variety of trajectories. The 'fire and forget' type missile can achieve a cruising altitude of 15 km and a terminal altitude as low as 10 m to hit the target.

Cruise missiles such as BrahMos, called "standoff range weapons", are fired from a range far enough to allow the attacker to evade defensive counter-fire. These are in the arsenal of most major militaries in the world.

With missiles made available for export, the platform is also seen as a key asset in defence diplomacy.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

3. The story of indelible ink, used in Indian elections since decades, and who makes it

Why in News?

With the first phase of voting for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections beginning on April 19, the classic symbol of Indian polls is visible everywhere – a left hand with only its index finger extended, marked by a purple-black indelible ink.



Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd., a Karnataka Government Undertaking which is the sole manufacturer of the ink in India, told that around 26.5 lakh phials or small bottles (with a capacity of 10 ml each) will be made for this election cycle.

Devised to prevent a person from casting more than one vote, the ink has been used in

Indian elections for decades. The India-manufactured has also travelled to other parts of the world to be used in other elections.

Been in use for decades, with little change

Today, once a voter has her credentials checked at the polling booth, and before she casts her vote by pressing a button on the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), the indelible ink is applied on her finger. This has been the case for decades, though the mode of voting has changed.

The Representation of the People Act (RoPA) of 1951 mentions the ink. Section 61 states that rules may be made under the Act "for the marking with indelible ink of the thumb or any other finger of every elector who applies for a ballot paper or ballot papers for the purpose of voting at a polling station before delivery of such paper or papers to him."

Why papers? Because before EVMs, ballot papers existed at polling stations. They contained the list of contesting candidates alongside their party symbols and names. Voters had to mark their preference on the paper and then drop it in ballot boxes to vote.

Before being given the ballot paper, a voter's index finger would be marked with the ink. The RoPA also speaks of rules being enacted "for prohibiting the delivery of any ballot paper" if a person already has a mark "on his thumb or any other finger..."

A report of the Election Commission of India (ECI) on the very first general elections (1951-52) said the ink was then applied with a glass rod. "That the ink proved quite satisfactory is evidenced by the fact that it is being used at many Local Bodies' elections as well," it said.

What makes the ink indelible?

Indelible ink contains silver nitrate. It is a colourless compound which becomes visible when exposed to ultraviolet light, including sunlight.

The higher silver nitrate's concentration, say around 20 percent, the higher will be the ink's quality. For up to 72 hours after application it can remain resistant to soap, liquids, home-cleansing, detergents, etc.

Who makes the indelible ink for Indian elections?

The indelible ink was first manufactured at the ECI's request by the government's Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).

The MyGov website says, "It was to counter the challenge of fraudulent voting" that research work on formulating the ink began in the 1950s by scientists in the erstwhile Chemical Division. It was later patented by the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), New Delhi. Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd. has been licensed to manufacture the ink and has been in the business since 1962. Earlier called Mysore Lac & Paint Works Ltd, it was established in 1937 by Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, then the Maharaja of Mysore.

Currently, the indelible ink is "exported to more than 25 countries that include Canada, Ghana, Nigeria, Mongolia, Malaysia, Nepal, South Africa and the Maldives."

However, the procedure of application can differ in each election. "For example, in Cambodia and the Maldives, voters need to dip his/her finger into the ink while in Burkina Faso the ink is applied with a brush, and nozzles are used for its use in Turkey".

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

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