E-cigarettes Ban in India

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved an ordinance prohibiting electronic cigarettes in the country.

What products does the ordinance ban?

- It makes production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of e-cigarettes and other Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) a punishable offence.
- ENDS includes vapes, e-hookahs and e-cigars.
- First-time offenders - Imprisonment up to 1 year or fine up to Rs 1 lakh, or both.
- Subsequent offences - Imprisonment up to 3 years and Rs 5 lakh in fine.
- Those who are found storing e-cigarettes and other such ENDS products will face up to 6 months in prison and up to Rs 55,000 in fines, or both.

What are e-cigarettes?

- E-cigarettes are **battery-powered devices** that heat a solution of nicotine and different flavours to create aerosol, which is then inhaled.
- These devices belong to a category of **vapour-based nicotine** products called ENDS.
- E-cigarettes and other ENDS products may look like their traditional counterparts, but they also come in other shapes and sizes and can resemble daily use products (like pens and USB drives).
- Several companies selling ENDS in India have positioned these products as a safer, less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes or as devices that could help users quit smoking.

What is the size of the e-cigarettes market in India?

- India’s vapour products market was emerging, but expected to experience rapid growth.
- According to analyst reports, it was valued at over $15 million in 2017 and projected to grow nearly 60% a year up to 2022.
- E-cigarettes are the most common type of ENDS, with over 460 different brands and more than 7,700 flavours marketed in India currently.

- Imports of e-cigarettes, their accessories and other ENDS products grew around 119% from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Why does the government want to ban these devices?

- The Health Ministry and Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation, India's drug regulatory authority, had attempted in the past to ban the import and sale of these products citing public health concerns.
- Before the ordinance was announced, the government had been facing hurdles in the form of court cases against the move, as ENDS were not declared as drugs in the country's drug regulations.
- These products have neither been assessed for safety in the national population nor been approved. Yet, they have been widely available to consumers.
- According to the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) 2019 white paper, the use of ENDS or e-cigarettes has
    1. Adverse effects like DNA damage, carcinogenesis, toxicity (cellular, molecular and immunological) and disorders (respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological).
    2. Impacts foetal development and pregnancy which had recommended a complete prohibition of these products.

Who gains?

- The government feels its decision will help protect the population from the risk of addiction through e-cigarettes.
- It says enforcement of the ordinance will complement its efforts to reduce tobacco use and help in reducing the economic and disease burden associated with it.
- Traditional tobacco firms, too, could potentially gain from the ban.

Does this mean traditional tobacco products are safer?

- Traditional tobacco products like cigarettes and chewing tobacco are already known to be harmful.
- Cigarette smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causes many diseases, and reduces the health of smokers in general.
- ICMR estimates - India is likely to face over 17 lakh new cancer cases and over 8 lakh deaths by 2020.
- According to WHO (2018), India had nearly 27 crore tobacco users and a substantial number of people exposed to second-hand smoke, putting them at an increased risk for cardiovascular diseases.
- Tobacco kills over 1 million people each year, contributing to 9.5% of all

deaths, it said.

What are some examples?

- **US** - Has the highest population of smokeless tobacco and vape-product users. Record of over 400 hospitalisations and 6 deaths related to use of e-cigarette uses. Plans to ban all e-cigarette flavours, except for tobacco.
- **UK** - Says British vapers are safe, as the issues in the US are due to use of illicit vaping fluid. Sales of ENDS products like vapes are legal. Introduced regulations for e-cigarette firms in 2016.
- **China** - Houses a third of the world's smokers. Reportedly seen an increasing population of vapers. In July 2019, it planned to regulate e-cigarettes to strengthen supervision of these products.
- **Japan** - Non-nicotine e-cigarettes currently not regulated, but nicotine-containing e-cigarettes are classified as medicinal products and regulated under Japan's pharmaceutical affairs law.

Source: The Indian Express

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