



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 24-04-2024

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Govt should act on FMCG forms using 'misleading' ads: **SC**

Syllabus: GS-3: Judiciary – SC judgments.

Context:

- *The Supreme Court emphasized the need for the government to take action against FMCG companies that use misleading advertisements.*
- *Specifically targeted at companies targeting families, especially those with babies and schoolchildren.*

Background:

- *The court expressed worries that misleading advertisements by FMCG companies could negatively impact the health of consumers, including babies and schoolchildren.*

Example:

- *Mentioned recent reports alleging higher sugar content in **Nestle's baby food products** in India and other countries.*
- *The Union Consumer Affairs Ministry has urged the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** to look into these allegations.*

Government's Role:

- *The court stressed the responsibility of the government to take action against misleading advertisements.*
- *Mentioned the need for the Union government to become involved if advertisements target babies and children.*

Widening the Scope of the Case:

- *The court expanded the case's scope by including the **Ministries of Consumer Affairs and Information and Broadcasting** as parties.*
- *The **AYUSH Ministry** was already involved in the case.*
- *Additional **Solicitor General K.M. Nataraj** represented the Union government in court.*

Observation by Justice Amanullah:

- ***Justice Amanullah** noted an incident where a news channel aired coverage of the Supreme Court hearing, with a part of the screen displaying a **misleading advertisement from an FMCG company.***

Contempt Case Against Patanjali Ayurved:

- The court was addressing a **contempt case involving Patanjali Ayurved**, its co-founder **Baba Ramdev**, and **associate Acharya Balkrishna**.
- They were accused of continuing to advertise their ayurvedic drugs in violation of the **Drugs and Magic Remedies Act**, despite previously assuring the Supreme Court otherwise.

What are rules around star campaigners?

Syllabus: GS-2: Elections and Electoral process.

Context:

- *Sunita Kejriwal, wife of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, was appointed as a 'star campaigner' by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for its campaign in Gujarat.*

What are the legal provisions?

- **Legal Provisions:** *Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) deals with expenditure incurred by 'leaders of a political party', commonly known as 'star campaigners'.*
- **Definition of Star Campaigners:** *Star campaigners are typically top leaders of a political party but can also include celebrities, as long as they are members of the appointing political party.*

Maximum Number of Star Campaigners:

- *Recognized political parties (national or state) can appoint a **maximum of 40 star campaigners**.*
- *Registered unrecognised political parties can appoint **up to 20 star campaigners**.*

Notification Requirement:

- *Political parties must communicate the names of their star campaigners to the **Election Commission (EC) and Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)** of the States within seven days from the date of election notification.*

Multi-phase Election Provision:

- *In the case of multi-phase elections, political parties can submit separate lists of star campaigners for different phases, but many major parties provide a single list for a state that applies to all phases.*

What are the benefits?

- **Exclusion from Candidate's Election Expenditure:** *Expenditure incurred by 'leaders of a political party' on travel for campaigning is not considered part of the election expenditure of a candidate from the same party.*

Impact on Candidate's Expenditure Limit:

- *Election expenditure limit for candidates is ₹95 lakh per Lok Sabha constituency in larger States and ₹75 lakh in smaller States.*
- *Star campaigners help parties attract votes for their candidates without adding to the candidate's expenditure limit.*

Conditions for Exclusion:

- *Applies only if star campaigners limit themselves to general campaigning for the party.*
- *If a star campaigner seeks votes for specific candidates or shares the stage with them, expenses for those events are added to the candidate's election expenditure.*
- *Boarding/lodging expenses incurred by star campaigners while campaigning for candidates are included in the respective candidate's expenditure account.*
- *If candidates travel with the star campaigner, 50% of the travel expenditure of the star campaigner is also attributed to those candidates.*

What are the issues?

- **EC Advisory on Campaigning:** *The Election Commission (EC) has advised political parties to maintain decorum and focus on issue-based debates during campaigning.*

Violation by Star Campaigners:

- *Star campaigners from various parties have been found guilty of using inappropriate language, appealing to caste/communal feelings, and making unsubstantiated allegations against leaders of other parties.*
- *Example: In January 2020, Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma of the BJP were removed from the list of star campaigners for inflammatory remarks during the Delhi Assembly election campaign.*
- *Example: In November 2020, the Supreme Court intervened when the EC revoked the star campaigner status of Kamal Nath from the Congress party for derogatory remarks against a woman candidate of the BJP, highlighting a dispute over the EC's authority in such matters.*

Issues with Expenditure Assessment:

- *The assessment of expenditure for rallies/meetings by star campaigners often falls significantly below actual expenses.*
- *This discrepancy may be due to the use of outdated rate cards by the EC, which do not reflect current market rates for various items.*
- *Consequently, there's a lower apportionment of expenditure to contesting candidates, raising concerns about fairness and transparency in campaign finance.*

What needs to be done?

Amendment of RP Act:

- *Consider amending the Representation of the People Act (RP Act) to empower the Election Commission (EC) to revoke the 'star campaigner' status of a leader in case of serious violations of the Model Code of Conduct.*
- *This amendment would deprive party candidates of expenditure relief for their campaigns, serving as a deterrent against misconduct.*

Enhanced Authority for EC:

- *Utilize the powers granted to the EC under Article 324 of the Constitution, which gives it the highest authority with superintendence and control of elections.*
- *Allow the EC to take decisive action to maintain the integrity of the electoral process and uphold standards of conduct.*

Ensuring Campaign Decorum:

- *Empower the EC to revoke 'star campaigner' status for leaders engaging in inappropriate behavior, promoting responsible campaigning.*
- *Encourage a sense of accountability among leaders and parties, fostering campaigns that adhere to decorum and restraint.*

Robust Expense Assessment:

- *Improve the assessment and apportionment of expenses incurred during rallies/meetings where star campaigners campaign for specific candidates.*
- *Ensure that expenses accurately reflect market rates, promoting fairness and transparency in campaign finance.*

Overall Impact:

- *These measures aim to strengthen the electoral process, uphold democratic principles, and foster fair and ethical campaigning.*

How is India planning to boost EV production

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy - Industrial Policy

Context:

- *The Indian government on March 15 approved a new US\$500-million-worth Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy, offering range of incentives with the intention of drawing investments from global EV companies and positioning India as a prime manufacturing hub for state-of-the-art EVs.*

Key features of the policy:

- **Minimum investment requirement:** *INR 41.5 billion (US\$500 million) is required for eligibility, with no maximum limit on investment.*
- **Manufacturing timeline:** *Three years to establish facilities and start commercial production of EVs.*

Domestic value addition (DVA) targets:

- *Achieve 25% DVA by the third year.*
- *Achieve 50% DVA by the fifth year.*

Customs duty incentives:

- *15% customs duty (as applicable to Completely Knocked Down units).*
- *Applicable for a five-year period.*
- *Minimum CIF value of US\$35,000 and above.*

Import limits and duty foregone:

- *Duty foregone on imported EVs limited to the investment made or INR 64.84 billion, whichever is lower.*
- *Maximum import limit of 40,000 EVs, with a maximum of 8,000 per year for investments of US\$800 million or more.*
- *Carryover of unutilized annual import limits permitted.*

- **Bank guarantee requirement:** *Investment commitments must be backed by a bank guarantee, which will be invoked in case of non-compliance with DVA and minimum investment criteria.*

Electric Vehicle (EV) Sales:

- *Jumped 49.25% year-on-year to over 15 lakh units in 2023.*
- *Recorded around 10 lakh units sold in 2022.*
- *Factors contributing to the surge: increased product availability, high fuel prices, state subsidies, and incentives under the FAME-II Initiative.*

FAME-II Scheme:

- *Launched in 2015 to promote electric and hybrid vehicle adoption.*
- **Full form:** *Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles in India.*
- *Phase-II approved in 2019 with a budget of 10,000 Crore for 3 years, extended to March 31, 2024.*
- *Aims to support 7000 e-Buses, 5 lakh e-3 Wheelers, 55,000 e-4 Wheeler Passenger Cars, and 10 lakh e-2 Wheelers.*
- *Nearly 2 lakh vehicles supported under FAME-II.*

Battery Swapping Policy:

- *Alternative method involving exchanging discharged batteries for charged ones.*
- *Provides flexibility and reduces downtime.*
- *NITI Aayog released a draft policy, prioritizing metropolitan cities for battery swapping network development.*

Switching to EVs: *Central/State governments offer upfront subsidies to reduce EV costs.*

E-AMRIT Portal: *Provides resources to facilitate the transition to electric vehicles.*

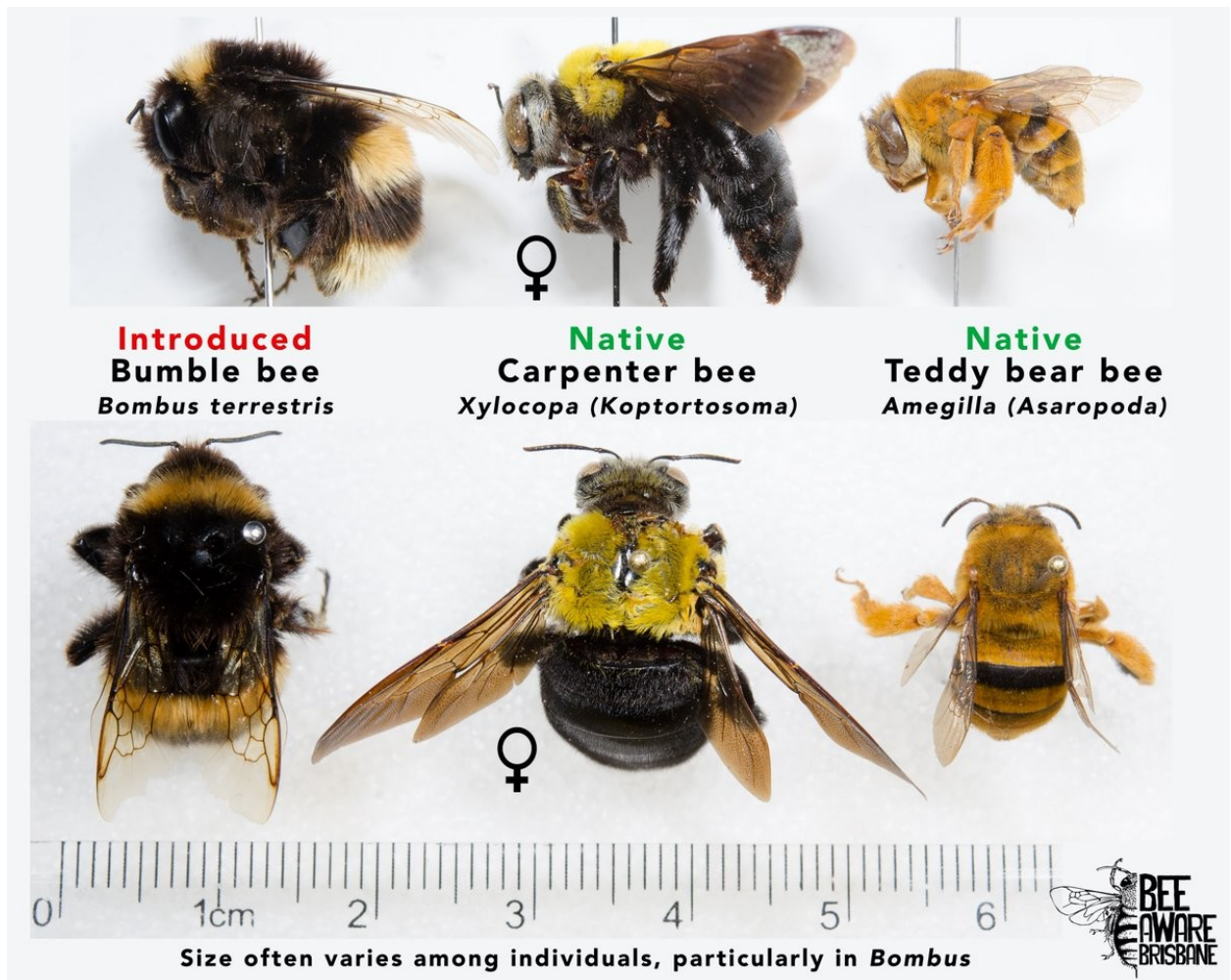
Bumblebees

Syllabus: GS-3; Environment

Context

- *Researchers at the University of Guelph in Canada made a startling discovery: certain bumblebees can survive underwater for up to a week.*

- This revelation occurred when **hibernating queen common eastern bumblebees** were **accidentally submerged during a study and later recovered alive.**
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About

- A bumblebee is any of over 250 species in the genus *Bombus*, part of Apidae, one of the bee families.
- This genus is the **only extant group in the tribe Bombini**, though a few extinct related genera (e.g., *Calyptapis*) are known from fossils.
- They are found primarily in **higher altitudes** or latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere, although they are also found in South America, where a few lowland tropical species have been identified.
- European bumblebees have also been introduced to New Zealand and Tasmania.
- Female bumblebees can sting repeatedly, but generally ignore humans and other animals.
- **Most bumblebees are social insects that form colonies with a single queen.**
- The colonies are smaller than those of honey bees, growing to as few as 50 individuals in a nest.

- *Cuckoo bumblebees are brood parasitic and do not make nests or form colonies; their queens aggressively invade the nests of other bumblebee species, kill the resident queens and then lay their own eggs, which are cared for by the resident workers.*
- *Cuckoo bumblebees were previously classified as a separate genus, but are now usually treated as members of *Bombus*.*
- *Like their relatives the honeybees, bumblebees feed on nectar, using their long hairy tongues to lap up the liquid; the proboscis is folded under the head during flight.*
- **Bumblebees gather nectar to add to the stores in the nest, and pollen to feed their young.**

Hibernation

- *Hibernation is a **state of low activity** and metabolism that some animals experience.*
- *It's a **seasonal heterothermy**, characterized by: Low body temperature, Slow breathing and heart rate, and Low metabolic rate.*
- *Hibernation is a **deep sleep that helps animals survive the winter without eating much.***
- *During hibernation, an animal's body temperature drops, and its heartbeat and breathing slow down.*
- *The animal enters a state where they are barely conscious and moves very little.*
- *Hibernation can last for several months, and animals rely on stored fat reserves to survive.*
- *To prepare for hibernation, animals eat extra food and store it as body fat.*
- *They use this fat as energy while sleeping.*
- *Some animals that hibernate include: **Bats, Hedgehogs, Ground squirrels, Groundhogs, and Marmots.***
- *Hibernators like dark, quiet winter homes.*
- *Some go underground or into caves.*
- *They may line their hibernation place with grass, hair, and other materials.*

The challenges of renewable energy

Syllabus: GS-3: Climate change mitigation.

Context:

- *Recently, The Hindu published an article titled "**The challenges of renewable energy**" on the occasion of **World Earth Day 2024**.*

India's Goals:

- *India aims to achieve **Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2070.***
- *This will involve a significant shift towards large-scale renewable energy.*

Uncertainty:

- *The consequences of **India's transition to renewable energy** on development and sustainability outcomes at local and national levels are uncertain.*

Solar Parks in India:

- ***Large-scale solar parks** are a significant part of India's strategy to reduce emissions.*
- *Currently, 214 sq. km of land are under solar parks, but estimates suggest we may need 50,000-75,000 sq. km to reach Net Zero targets.*

Local Impacts:

- *Farmers near solar parks have varied experiences.*
- ***In Bhadla, farmers have lost common lands** and pastoralists face shrinking grazing areas, leading to protests.*
- ***In Pavagada, many farmers** are content with leasing land for solar parks, as it provides steady income from otherwise unproductive land.*
- *Challenges include water security issues and economic disparity between large and small landowners.*

Regional/National Concerns:

- *Solar parks may **compete for natural resources like water**, impacting nearby communities.*
- *Current estimates for land availability don't consider water sources.*
- ***Competition with agriculture** may affect food security.*
- ***Biodiversity loss is a concern**, especially in sensitive ecosystems like deserts.*
- *Uncertainty exists regarding the feasibility and economic viability of alternative low carbon technologies and the impacts of climate change.*

Ownership Models:

- *Large-scale renewable energy projects can avoid past injustices by experimenting with ownership models.*
- ***Community initiatives could generate revenues**, promote small businesses, upskill locals, improve incomes, stimulate economies, and enhance energy access.*

Legal and Regulatory Reforms:

- **Solar and wind park development** currently bypasses *Environmental and Social Impact Assessment*.
- **Legal and regulatory frameworks** need revision and strengthening to mitigate adverse social and environmental impacts.

Fair Compensation Mechanisms:

- *There's a lack of mechanisms to ensure fair compensation for small and medium landowners leasing their land for renewable energy projects.*

Local Governance Involvement:

- *Involving local governance units in planning and siting processes can align local developmental goals with renewable energy development.*

Wasteland Classification and Commons Recognition:

- *Wasteland classification requires significant overhaul.*
- *Recognizing commons under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** could improve environmental and equity outcomes by granting land ownership to affected communities.*
- **Solar park development corporations** need to engage with local governance units like Gram Sabha if land is to be leased or acquired for projects.

Agrivoltaics:

- **Agrivoltaics combine solar energy with agriculture**, allowing for crop growth, grazing, and native habitats under and between panels.
- *Farmers can become 'prosumers,' producing and consuming energy while growing crops.*

Challenges Across Technologies:

- *Similar challenges and opportunities exist with other renewable energy technologies.*
- *For example, wind energy may have adverse effects on bird ecosystems.*

Employment Impacts:

- *Large-scale renewable energy projects could create employment opportunities at the district level.*
- *However, they may lead to significant employment shifts between sectors at the national level.*

Skilling and Training Programs:

- *Adequate skilling and training programs are necessary, especially for unskilled and poorer populations, to protect them during employment shifts.*

Second Green Revolution:

- *We're on the brink of a new green revolution focused on energy.*
- *This presents an opportunity to foresee and address unintended consequences.*

Alignment of Structures:

- *We can align technological, economic, and institutional structures to maximize synergies.*
- *This alignment can optimize outcomes related to sustainability, climate change mitigation, and development.*