



Election Symbols

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Why in News

Recently, the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has decided to freeze the election symbol of a Political Party.

The **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** empowers the Election Commission to recognise political parties and allot symbols.

Key Points

- **About:**

- An electoral or election symbol is a **standardized symbol** allocated to a political party.
- They are **used by the parties during their campaigning** and are shown on **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)**, where the voter chooses the symbol and votes for the associated party.
- They were **introduced to facilitate voting by illiterate people**, who can't read the name of the party while casting their votes.
- In the 1960s, it was proposed that the **regulation, reservation and allotment of electoral symbols** should be done through a law of Parliament, i.e. Symbol Order.
- In a response to this proposal, the ECI stated that the recognition of political parties is supervised by the provisions of **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** and so will the allotment of symbols.
 - The Election Commission registers political parties for the purpose of elections and grants them recognition as national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance. The other parties are simply declared as registered-unrecognised parties.
 - The **recognition determines their right to certain privileges** like allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on television and radio stations and access to electoral rolls.
 - **Every national party and every state party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved** for its use throughout the country and the states respectively.

- **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968:**

- Under **Paragraph 15 of the Order, EC can decide disputes** among rival groups or sections of a **recognised political party** staking claim to its name and symbol.

The **EC is the only authority to decide issues** on a dispute or a merger under the order. The **Supreme Court (SC)** upheld its validity in **Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI in 1971**.
- This applies to **disputes in recognised national and state parties**.
- For **splits in registered but unrecognised parties**, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.
- In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a **clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs** have supported one of the factions.
- Before 1968, the EC issued notifications and executive orders under the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961**.
- The **splinter group of the party** - other than the group that got the party symbol - **had to register itself as a separate party**.

They **could lay claim to national or state party status only** on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration.