EC's Rules on Election Symbols

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Why in News?

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) is not a political party; even if it registers and asks for the cockroach as its election symbol, the Election Commission is unlikely to allow it.

- **Legal Provision** – The EC allots election symbols to parties and independent candidates as per the *Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968*.
- **Recognised National & State Parties** – The candidates are allotted to the reserved symbol of their respective parties; for instance, BJP (lotus) & Congress (raised hand).
- **Unrecognised parties** – The EC allots symbols from a *list of "free symbols"*.
- The independent candidates & unrecognised parties can request their choice of symbol from the list, but they are not assured of getting the same.
- **Allowed Symbols** – In the list of free symbols, which the EC revises from time to time, images include
    - **Fruits & vegetables** – Jackfruit, grapes, and many others.
    - **Household Appliances** – Air-conditioner, mmersion rod, latch, mixer, toothbrush, and TV remote.
    - **Everyday Items** – Balloon, doorbell, dustbin, frying pan, toothbrush.
    - **Food Items** – Cake, toffees, and other edible symbols.
    - **Farm & Sports Equipment** – Tools & gear commonly used in daily life.
- **Exception** – The EC list states that certain symbols can be allotted freely except in certain states and Union Territories.
- **For instance –** The apple symbol can be allotted freely across India, except in certain states and Union Territories like
    - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.
- In those states, the apple symbol is already taken by a recognised party.
- Different recognised parties in different states can use the same symbol, since there's no rule against it, and they usually don't compete.
- **Cockroach be an election symbol** – Following representations from animal welfare activists in the 1990s, the EC stopped allotting animals as election symbols.
- **TN 1989 election** – Former Union Minister and founder of People for Animals (PFA), Maneka Gandhi recalled that during the 1989 TN election, roosters used as symbols were mistreated and many died.
- **Symbol of Bahujan Samaj Party** – It was formed prior to the ban, still retains its election symbol, the elephant, one of the few exceptions.

- **Not Allowed –** With the current EC's rules against allotting animals, to stand in cockroach symbols *would not be allowed*.

Reference

Indian Express | Can a political party have the cockroach as its election symbol?

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