

1. Lobbying in India exists in a perennially grey legal and policy arena. In this context, discuss the need to formally recognize and regulate lobbying in India.

Answer :

Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence the legislations and policies of the government and legislators on behalf of groups or individuals (corporates, advocacy groups).

Lack of its formal acceptance and explicit regulation in India often equates it with bribery. For instance, in 2012, Walmart, in accordance with US law, disclosed its lobbying activities in India, which created a furor in Parliament. While lobbyists in India are viewed as representatives of big businesses who indulge in corrupt practices to push their agenda, Indian representatives have lobbied in USA for favorable outcomes related to pharmaceutical trade and Indo-US civil nuclear deal.

Need to formally recognize and regulate lobbying :

- Recognition would bring activities of Interest groups in public domain thus serving the purpose of safeguarding rights of citizens.
- It would create a legitimate channel of bringing expertise in public policy making.
- Disclosures of expenses incurred by lobbyists are likely to force interest groups to engage in the legislative process through legitimate means.
- Universal access to information on expenses and details of communications with policymakers would give impetus to more debates in the public domain.
- Lobbying as a means of engaging with the legislative process would also further the ideals of a participative democracy.

However, there are concerns that legalizing lobbying may lead to creation of powerful groups such as National Rifle Association (NRA) in USA and the voices of people and group with low resources may remain unheard to the government.

Hence, India needs to formally regulate lobbying through:

- a clear definition,
- laying comprehensive provisions and strict transparency norms.

India may draw inspiration from the US model, which requires companies to report lobbying expenditure, list of issues, and the public officials contacted.

Such a move is long overdue and would help foster a more stable and attractive investment climate for both Indian and foreign firms. While we can certainly draw inspiration from the legislations in other developed economies, we have to tailor them to our socio-economic realities.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. More than a decade after it was passed, the implementation of the RTI Act leaves much to be desired. Comment. Also discuss the issues associated with the recent proposals to amend the RTI Act.
(150 words)
2. Critically discuss the evolving policy on reservation in promotions in India with special focus on its ability to meet the objectives of social justice.
(150 words)