



10 January, 2024

Committee for “Prevention and Regulation of Misleading Advertisement in Coaching Sector”

Context: The inaugural session of the Committee, established by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), took place to commence the formulation of guidelines addressing deceptive advertising within the coaching sector.

➤ Committee Formation and Composition:

- The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) convened the first meeting of a Committee tasked with developing guidelines to address misleading advertisements in the coaching sector.
- The Committee, led by Chairman Shri Rohit Kumar Singh, includes members such as Commissioner (CCPA), representatives from Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Ministry of Education, National Law University (NLU), Delhi, FIITJEE, Khan Global Studies, Ikgai Law, and Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA).

➤ Objective of the Guidelines:

- The guidelines aim to be universally applicable, covering all coaching institutions, whether online or physical, and encompassing all forms of advertisements.
- The primary focus is on preventing coaching institutions from making false claims related to success rates, number of selections, and other misleading practices.

➤ Key Discussion Points:

- The Committee discussed the draft of the guidelines during the meeting.
- Shri Rohit Kumar Singh emphasized the CCPA's commitment to protecting consumer interests and ensuring clarity in addressing aspects related to advertisements in the coaching sector.

➤ Guideline Highlights:

- **Applicability and Scope:**
 - Guidelines apply to all coaching institutes, regardless of their format or medium of advertisement.
 - Encompasses both online and physical coaching institutions.
- **Conditions for Misleading Advertisement:**
 - Concealing important information related to the courses opted by successful candidates.
 - Prohibits false claims regarding success rates, number of selections, and any practices leading to consumer misunderstanding.
- **Prescribed Do's and Don'ts:**
 - Coaching institutes must include specific information in advertisements, such as the rank secured by successful candidates, course details, duration, and whether it is a paid or free course.
 - Prohibits claims like 100% selection or 100% job guarantees without providing verifiable evidence.
 - Specifies the font and placement of disclaimer/disclosure information in advertisements.

• Legal Implications and Enforcement:

- Penalties for misleading advertisements by coaching sectors will be governed by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- The guidelines serve as clarification to stakeholders, with violations continuing to be governed under existing provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

➤ Urgency and Action Taken:

- The Committee recognized the urgent need for issuing the guidelines.
- CCPA had previously taken suo moto action against misleading advertisements by issuing notices to 31 coaching institutes and imposing fines on 9 of them.

Global economy's weakest half-decade performance

Context: The World Bank warns of a sluggish global economy at the end of 2024, marking the slowest five-year GDP growth in 30 years, emphasizing the need for a major course correction.

➤ Global Economic Trends:

- The World Bank warns of potential near-term risks to the global economy due to mounting geopolitical tensions.
- The latest Global Economic Prospects report, released on January 9, 2024, predicts the slowest half-decade of gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 30 years.

➤ Factors Impacting Global Economy:

- A June 2023 report highlighted a precarious global economic situation, anticipating a significant growth slowdown.
- Contributing factors included sharp interest-rate increases, negative shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and monetary policy tightening to combat high inflation.

➤ Current State of Global Economy:

- The global economy has improved compared to the previous year, with a diminished risk of a global recession attributed to the strength of the United States' economy.
- However, the medium-term outlook has worsened for many developing economies, experiencing slowing growth, sluggish global trade, and tight financial conditions.

➤ Global Trade and Borrowing Costs:

- Global trade growth in 2024 is expected to be half the average of the decade preceding the pandemic.
- Borrowing costs for developing economies, particularly those with low credit ratings, are projected to remain high, with global interest rates at four-decade highs in inflation-adjusted terms.

➤ Projected Global Growth:

- Global growth is expected to slow for the third consecutive year, from 2.6% last year to 2.4% in 2024, significantly lower than the average of the 2010s.
- Developing economies are forecasted to grow at a rate of 3.9%, more than a percentage point lower than the previous decade's average.

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➤ **Challenges for Low-Income Countries:**

- Low-income countries are expected to grow by 5.5%, lower than initially anticipated.
- By the end of 2024, a significant portion of developing and low-income countries' populations will still be poorer than pre-COVID pandemic levels.

➤ **World Bank's Chief Economist's Perspective:**

- Indermit Gill, the World Bank Group's chief economist, highlights weak near-term growth, especially impacting the poorest countries.
- Advocates for governments to act promptly to accelerate investment and strengthen fiscal policy frameworks to address global priorities.

➤ **Call for Increased Investment:**

- The report recommends a significant increase in investment by developing countries, approximately \$2.4 trillion per year, to address climate change and achieve key global development goals by 2030.
- Without such investment, per capita investment growth in developing economies is expected to average 3.7% between 2023 and 2024, about half the rate of the previous two decades.

Sponge Aquaculture

Context: As ocean temperatures rise, women in Zanzibar are transitioning from cultivating seaweed to adopting climate-resilient sponge farming to adapt and sustain their livelihoods.

➤ Sea sponge aquaculture involves the controlled farming of sea sponges, employing various techniques in the world's oceans.

➤ Critical factors such as light, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and waste accumulation influence the growth rate of sponges in this controlled environment.

➤ **Historical Context:**

- The vast diversity of sea sponges, with over 8000 species existing in oceanic and freshwater habitats.
- Historical prominence of sponge fishing, which became a lucrative industry, with annual catches exceeding 181 tonnes and generating over 1 million U.S. dollars between 1913 and 1938.

➤ **Early Aquaculture Challenges:**

- Initial attempts at sea sponge aquaculture faced resistance and interference from traditional sponge fishermen.
- Commercial sponge farming encountered difficulties in market penetration and poor consumer adoption due to opposition.

➤ **Benefits of Sea Sponge Aquaculture:**

- Sea sponge aquaculture offers ease of establishment, requiring minimal infrastructure and holds potential for income generation, especially in developing countries.

- The simplicity of the process allows the involvement of entire families, aligning with traditional family farm practices.

➤ **Income Generation and Commercial Uses:**

- Sea sponge aquaculture provides a continuous source of income throughout the year and is utilized for producing bath sponges and extracting bioactive compounds.
- Commercial applications range from cosmetic and bath purposes to industrial use, with the quality of the sponge determining its market value.

➤ **Renewed Interest and Sustainable Cultivation:**

- A resurgence of interest in sponge aquaculture due to the growing global demand for bath sponges.
- Specific cases, such as sustainable cultivation in Micronesia, highlight the importance of varied methods to ensure the continued sustainability of sea sponge farming.

➤ **Factors Affecting Sponge Growth:**

- Essential factors influencing sponge growth include salinity, pH, temperature, light, and dissolved oxygen.
- Disease outbreaks, effective waste removal methods, and meticulous site selection also play significant roles in the success of sea sponge aquaculture.

➤ **Methods of Cultivation:**

- Common methods for bath sponge aquaculture include the rope method and mesh bag method.
- Integrated multi-trophic aquaculture systems are implemented to address environmental concerns and reduce the impact of waste discharge.

➤ **Specific Case: Bath Sponge Aquaculture in Micronesia:**

- Micronesia stands out as a region producing sustainably farmed sea sponges, emphasizing low investment costs and employing natural processing methods.
- The cultivation of the sponge *Coscinoderma matthewsi* using the rope method showcases the successful application of sea sponge aquaculture in this context.

➤ **Bioactive Sponge Aquaculture:**

- Ongoing research aims to optimize methods for the production of bioactive metabolites in sea sponges across various regions.
- New cultivation methods, like the "mesh array method," reduce the number of sponges required for optimal bioactive metabolite production.

➤ **Factors Affecting Metabolite Production:**

- Various factors, including light intensity, bio-fouling, and environmental changes, impact metabolite biosynthesis in sea sponges.
- Understanding these factors provides a competitive advantage for maximizing metabolite production and overall yield.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Central Consumer Protection Authority



Recently, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) held the first meeting of a committee constituted to prepare guidelines on misleading advertisements in the coaching sector.

About Central Consumer Protection Authority:

- The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) is a **regulatory authority** that was established in **2019**.
- Its **mandate is to protect consumer rights** by regulating unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements.
- It also **issues guidelines** to help enforce and improve consumer rights.
- It **works under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.
- It is comprised of **members appointed by the Central Government**, including a **Chief Commissioner** and **two Commissioners** (One Commissioner will represent goods, while the other will represent services).
- Its **headquarter is in New Delhi** and has regional and other offices in other parts of India.

Sisal Leaves



Recently, The Stanford team has found that an absorbent material can be produced using sisal leaves, and could replace cotton, wood pulp, and chemical absorbents in sanitary napkins.

About Sisal Leaves:

- Sisal is a member of the **Asparagaceae family** and its fiber is the most important of the leaf fiber group.
- Sisal leaves are **stiff, green, sword-like** and possess exceptional durability.
- These leaves store water due to **their succulent nature**, making sisal plants drought-resistant.
- Each sisal plant typically yields around **200-250 usable leaves** during its lifespan of **7-10 years**.
- Sisal fibers are **used for making ropes, paper, cloth and now, highly absorbent materials for menstrual hygiene products**.
- **Aztec and Mayan civilizations** were among the first to make paper from sisal leaves.
- Sisal leaves historically used for various purposes like making twine, **cloth, carpets** and even in the production of **mezcal**, a distilled alcoholic beverage.
- **Brazil is the largest producer**, followed by **Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar and China**.

Nanoplastics



Recently, the US study has found hundreds of thousands of nanoplastic particles in bottled drinking water.

About Nanoplastics:

- Nanoplastics are plastic particles **smaller than 1 micrometer**, significantly **tinier than microplastics**.
- They **originate from the breakdown of larger plastic materials** and there's no theoretical limit to how small they can get.
- They pose **higher risks** to human health compared to larger microplastics.
- Due to their minuscule size, nanoplastics can bypass biological barriers like the **intestines and lungs**, potentially entering the **bloodstream** and reaching vital organs like the **heart and brain**.
- Recent studies have found significant quantities of nanoplastics in bottled drinking water, ranging from **110,000 to 370,000 particles per liter**.
- This quantity is notably **higher (10 to 100 times)** than earlier estimations, raising concerns about the safety of bottled water consumption.
- Analytical techniques like **stimulated Raman scattering microscopy** aid in identifying and studying nanoplastics.

Pathogenic Fungi



Recently, the scientists have characterised a natural pathogenic fungi to help save eucalyptus forests from devastating pest.

About Pathogenic Fungi:

- Pathogenic fungi are **naturally occurring organisms** that infect and cause diseases in insects, pests, and sometimes in plants.
- They act as **natural biocontrol agents**, targeting specific pests without harming other organisms or the environment.
- They are **utilized in developing bio-pesticides** for integrated pest management (IPM) strategies.
- They offer an eco-friendly alternative to **chemical pesticides**, reducing reliance on harmful chemicals.
- These fungi, such as **Beauveria bassiana** and **Metarhizium anisopliae**, are known for their effectiveness in controlling pest populations.
- These fungi find applications in various sectors like **agriculture, forestry** and even **urban pest management**.

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Place in News

Mauritius

Recently, the Union Cabinet approves MoU between Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC) concerning cooperation on the development of a Joint Small Satellite.

Mauritius (Capital: Port Louis)

Location: Mauritius is an island of Africa's southeast coast located in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar.

Significance:

- It is consistently ranked as the **most peaceful African country**.
- Le Morne Brabant**, a 556-meter-high mountain in Mauritius' southwest, is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** symbolizing slavery resistance.
- Explored by Arabs in **975**, Mauritius later welcomed visits from **Portuguese** and **Dutch sailors**, contributing to its historical significance.
- Mauritius follows a **Westminster parliamentary system**, reflecting its governance model.
- Mauritius and India established diplomatic relations in **1948**, before **Mauritius became independent in 1968**.



Personality in News

Rashid Khan

Rashid Khan (1 July 1968 – 9 January 2024)

- Rashid Khan, a **Hindustani classical singer** and **music maestro Ustad** was born in **Badayun**, Uttar Pradesh.
- He received his initial training from his maternal **granduncle, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan (1909-1993)**.

Contributions:

- He experimented with fusing pure Hindustani music with lighter musical genres for instance, in the Sufi fusion recording **Naina Piya Se** (Amir Khusro) or in experimental concerts with western instrumentalist **Louis Banks**.
 - He gave his voice to a number of songs in **Hindi and Bengali films from 2004 to 2019**.
 - The most popular songs are **Aaoge Jab Tum Saajna in Jab We Met in 2007**, **Alah Hi Rahem in My Name Is Khan in 2010** and **Bol Ke Lab Azad Hain in the film Manto in 2018**.
- Awards and Honours:**
- He won several awards including the **Padma Shri** and the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2006**.
 - In **2022**, he was honoured with the **Padma Bhushan**, the third-highest civilian award of the country.
 - The West Bengal government also honoured Ustad Rashid Khan with **Banga Bibhushan and Sangeet Mahasamman**.



POINTS TO PONDER

- To which political party does Sukanta Majumdar, one of the recipients of the Sansad Ratna Awards, belong? - **haratiya Janata Party (BJP)**
- In which state is the Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve located? - **Chhattisgarh**
- Where is the Kyaukphyu SEZ and deep sea port located? - **Myanmar**
- Sheikh Hasina, who recently secured a record fourth consecutive term as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, is affiliated with which political party? - **Awami League**
- What kind of vehicle is Orca, recently delivered by Boeing to the US Navy? - **Uncrewed Undersea Vehicle**

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