

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1834

TO BE ANSWERED ON FRIDAY, 11th FEBRUARY, 2022

EXPENDITURE LIMIT FOR ELECTIONS

1834. SHRI THIRUNAVUKKARASAR SU:
SHRI RAVNEET SINGH BITTU:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there has been a recent revision in the expenditure limits for the candidates of parliamentary and assembly elections in the country; (b) if so, the details thereof along with the consultation process, if any, followed for deciding the revised expenditure ceilings;
- (c) whether the Government has hiked the expenditure limit of candidates for contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections, if so, the details thereof along with the time by when the above proposal is likely to be implemented;
- (d) the details of the mechanism being employed to ensure that the spending by the various candidates are within the revised limits in various parliamentary and assembly elections; and
- (e) whether the Government is taking any other steps to make the election process more transparent and fair in the country and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE
(SHRI KIREN RIJJU)**

(a) : Yes sir.

(b) : The Election Commission of India (ECI) has informed that a committee was formed comprising of Shri Harish Kumar, Retd. IRS Officer, Shri Umesh Sinha, Secretary General, ECI, Shri Chandra Bhushan Kumar, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI and DG (Expenditure) to study the cost factors and other related issues, and make suitable recommendations. The ECI has accepted the

recommendations of the Committee and sent its recommendations to the Government.

(c) : The Government *vide* its notification S.O. 72(E), dated the 6th January, 2022, enhanced the maximum limit of candidates' election expenses as prescribed under rule 90 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 and the same has been forwarded by the Commission to CEOs of all States/UTs with the request to bring it to the notice of all District Electoral Officers, Returning Officers, other election authorities concerned and political parties.

(d) and (e) : The ECI has stated that they are seriously concerned about the menace of 'Money Power' which disturbs the level playing field in elections. The ECI has taken several steps to monitor the election expenses of the contesting candidates and issued comprehensive guidelines in the past and updated in "Compendium of Instructions on Election Expenditure Monitoring (October, 2021)" which is available on Commission's website and also issued for ongoing General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of 5 States of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa. In order to keep election expenses within the ceiling prescribed by the law, (the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961) and also to maintain level playing field among candidates. The ECI has directed to maintain the day-to-day account register in the prescribed manner and to get it inspected before the election authorities 3 times during election period. The ECI has prescribed the Shadow Observation Register to keep records of major expenses of the candidates by the election authorities and reporting thereof in case of discrepancy *viz.* under reporting of expenses etc. noticed by them to the candidates for corrective measures. The appointment of Expenditure Observers, Assistant Expenditure Observers, Video Surveillance Teams & Video Viewing Teams, Accounting Teams, Complaint Monitoring & Call Centre, Media Certification & Monitoring Committee on Paid News, deployment of Flying Squads and Static Surveillance Teams for Election Expenditure Monitoring. The ECI has also prescribed Standard Operating Procedure for Flying Squads and Static Surveillance Teams *vide* its Order no. 76/Instructions/EEPS/2015/Vol. dated 29.05.2015 to keep vigil over unaccounted money and also to keep vigil over money and other illicit items which may vitiate level playing field. The ECI has directed that Election Expenditure of the Candidates shall be done through the dedicated bank

account opened for election expenses purpose by the candidate through electronic mode in case amount exceeds Rs.10,000/-.

The ECI has requisitioned the services of various enforcement agencies *viz.* CBDT, CBIC, DGIT (Inv.), State Excise Department, State Police Department, Narcotics Control Bureau, DRI, ED, FIU-IND, BCAS, RPF, Department of Post, BSF, SSB, ITBP, Coast Guard, Assam Rifles to facilitate effective monitoring of election expenditure. Besides, enforcement of Model Code of Conduct helps to maintain level playing field on ground. The ECI has created IT tools like 'SUVIDHA' to facilitate permission for campaign on first-cum-first serve basis. Also, the ECI has directed the CEOs to make available facilities for campaign on an equitable basis. The ECI has doubled the allocated time for campaign on Door Darshan and AIR for all recognised parties.

The ECI has been taking several measures to prevent money power in elections. It is mentioned that various monitoring mechanisms are put in place during election to monitor day-to-day election expenditure incurred by the candidate and to check influence of voters by distribution of cash, liquor, drugs etc. General, Police & Expenditure observers, who are senior officers from the civil services are appointed to keep a watch on the entire election process.
