

MOST IMMEDIATE

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No. 1/41/2/2024-Cab
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)
CABINET SECRETARIAT (MANTRIMANDAL SACHIVALAYA)


New Delhi, the 16th April, 2024

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: ECI reference regarding photographs on the websites of the Central Government.

The undersigned is directed to enclose a copy of Letter No. 437/6/COMP/ECI/LET/FUNCT/MCC/2024/987 dated 15.04.2024 from Election Commission of India for information and necessary action.

Encl.: as above



(S.G.P. Verghese)

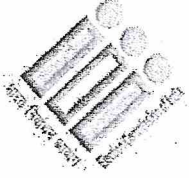
Joint Secretary

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All Secretaries to the Government of India

By Special Messenger



भारत निर्वाचन आयोग सचिवालय
SECRETARIAT OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

निर्वाचन सदन, अशोक रोड, नई दिल्ली-110001

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.

No. 437/6/COMP/ECI/LET/FUNCT/MCC/2024/987

Dated: 15th April, 2024

To

Cabinet Secretary,
Government of India,
Cabinet Secretariat,
Rashtrapati Bahwan,
New Delhi-110004.

Subject: Complaints against photographs of Hon'ble Prime Minister and other Union Ministers on the websites of the Central Government - regarding.

Sir/Madam,

I am directed to state that Commission had announced the schedule for conduct of General Elections to House of the People, 2024 and State Legislative Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim and certain bye-elections on 16th March, 2024. Model Code of Conduct has come into force from the date of declaration of schedule of elections.


The provisions of MCC and various instructions issued by the Commission inter-alia provide that the party in power whether at the Centre or in the State(s) concerned shall ensure that no cause be given for any complaint that it has used its position to further its electoral prospects. Further, Para 4 of the Commission's letter No. 437/6/1/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2024 dated 16.03.2024 (copy enclosed) expressly provides that all references of Ministers, Politicians or political parties available on Central/State Government's website shall be removed.

The Commission has received complaints that some Government websites like those of Enforcement Directorate and Sahara India Refund Portal are still displaying photographs of Ministers.

The Commission has considered the issue and held that the depiction of photographs of Ministers and any political functionaries, as aforesaid, is in violation of Model Code of Conduct and hence, such photographs shall have to be immediately removed from the official Government websites.

In view of the above, the Commission has hereby directed to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned instruction and to furnish a compliance report at the earliest.

Yours faithfully,


(NARENDRA N. BUTOLIA)
SR. PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

By Spl. Messenger/mail

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI-110001

No. 437/6/1/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2024

Dated: 16th March, 2024

To

1. The Cabinet Secretary,
Government of India,
Rashtrapati Bhawan,
New Delhi.
2. The Chief Secretaries of all States and
Chief Secretaries/Administrators of Union Territories
3. The Chief Electoral Officers of
all States and Union Territories.

Subject: Immediate action to be taken for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct after announcement of General Elections to House of the People (Lok Sabha), 2024 and State Legislative Assemblies in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim and certain bye-elections-regarding.

Sir,

I am directed to state that the Election Commission has announced the schedule for holding General Election to House of the People (Lok Sabha), 2024 and State Legislative Assemblies in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim and certain bye-elections, operation of 'MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT' comes into effect with the announcement of elections by the Commission. In view of the elections, the Commission has given following directions for effective enforcement of provisions of MCC:-

1. **Defacement of Property-** ECI instructions contained in letter No. 3/7/2023-SDR, dated 12th October, 2023, provide for prevention of defacement of property. The Commission has directed to ensure strict compliance of its instruction and to take time bound action as prescribed below-
 - (a) **Defacement of Government property-** For this purpose a Government premise would include any Government office and the campus wherein the office building, compound and establishment are situated. All wall- writing, posters/papers or defacement in any

other form, including cutout/hoardings, banners, flags etc, on Government property shall be removed **within 24 hours** from the announcement of elections by the Election Commission.

(b) **Defacement of public property and misuse of public space-** All unauthorized political advertisement, in the form of wall writing/posters/papers or defacement in any other form, cutout/hoardings, banners flags etc. at public property and in public space like railway station, Bus stands, Airports, railway Bridges; Roadways, government. buses, Electric/Telephone poles , municipal/local bodies' buildings etc., shall be removed **within 48 hours** from the announcement of elections.

(c) **Defacement of private property-** Subject to any local law and Court's direction, all unauthorized political advertisement displayed at private property shall be removed **within 72 hours** from the announcement of elections by the Election Commission.

2. **Misuse of official vehicle-** The ECI's Consolidated instructions contained in letter No. 464/L&O/2023/EPS(Use of Veh.), dated 26th June, 2023, among other things, provides that **there shall be a total ban on use of official vehicle by any political party, candidate or any other person connected with election (except officials performing any election related official duty) for campaigning, electioneering or election related travel during elections (subject to certain exception mentioned therein).** The expression 'official vehicle' means and shall include, any vehicle used or capable of being used for the purpose of transport, whether propelled by mechanical power or otherwise and will include trucks, lorries, tempos, jeeps, cars, auto rickshaws, e-rickshaws, buses, belonging to Central Government, State Government/UT Administrations, public undertakings of Central/State Government, Joint sector undertakings of Central/State Government, local bodies, municipal corporations, marketing boards, cooperative societies or any other body in which public funds, however small a portion of the total, are invested. **The CEOs/DEOs shall take necessary action for compliance of ECI instructions within 24 hours of the announcement of the elections.**

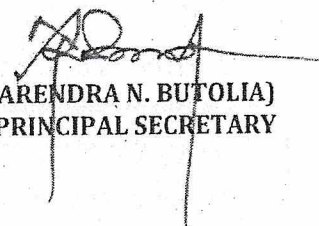
3. **Advertisement at the cost of public exchequer-** ECI instructions contained in letter No. 437/6/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2024(ADVERTISEMENTS), dated 2nd January, 2024 provides that at the cost of public exchequer in the newspapers and other media and the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided. No advertisements shall be issued in

electronic and print media highlighting the achievements of the Govt. at the cost of public exchequer. If any advertisement has already been released for telecast/broadcast or publication in the print media, it must be ensured that the telecast/broadcast of such ads on electronic media is stopped forthwith and that no such ad is published in any newspapers, magazines, etc., i.e. in print media, from the date of announcement and it should be immediately withdrawn. **The CEOs/DEOs have to take immediate action to remove/stop any advertisement, in the print/electronic media, showing the achievements of the Government soon after the announcement of elections.**

4. **Photograph of political functionary at official website-** ECI instruction contained in letter No. 437/6/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2024(MCC ENFORCEMENT) dated 2nd January, 2024 provides that all references of Ministers, Politicians or political parties available on central/state Government's official website shall be removed. The CEOs have to take immediate action to remove/hide the photographs of any political functionary from official websites of state department.
5. **Development/construction related activities- within 72 hours** of announcement of elections, the CEO/DEO shall obtain the following list of works for reference in case of validating any complaint on violation of MCC:
 - (i) List of work which has already been started on ground.
 - (ii) List of fresh work which has not started on ground.
6. **Activities for Expenditure Monitoring and enforcement of MCC-** Flying squad, FST, video team, intensive checking for liquor/Cash/Contra banned drugs, flying squads of excise department to check illicit trafficking of Drug/Narcotics to be immediately activated after announcement.
7. **Complaint Monitoring System-** The poll going states shall have a complaint redressal mechanism based on website and call center. The toll free number of call center is 1950. Complaints can be registered by making calls to the toll free call center numbers or on the website. Complainants will also be informed of the action taken by SMS and by the call center. Complainants can also see the details of the action taken on their complaints. This system should be operational within 24 hours of the announcement. All complaints should be dealt promptly and properly. The 24x7 control Room at the district level must be activated and sufficient deployment of manpower and other logistics be ensured in particular, round the clock personnel should be deployed in the control room and their duty roster must be issued to avoid any evasion or confusion.

8. **IT Application-** All IT applications including official website and social media shall be operational with the announcement.
9. **Dissemination of information for Awareness of Voters and political parties.** Publicity of major election activity would be given through CEO/DEO/RO. For this purpose, all necessary information shall be disseminated through radio, tv, cinema, government channel to display voter education material.
10. **Active cooperation from Educational Institutions and Civil Societies-** Cooperation can be sought from educational institutions and civil societies for giving wide publicity to the election related information to the general public and other stakeholders.
11. **Media Centre-** Efforts should be made for awareness among the voters, political parties and other stakeholder through media center about election system including use of EVM/VVPAT.
12. **MCMC/DEMC-** ECI instruction contained in letter no. 491/MCMC/5/2023/Communication dated 24th August, 2023 provides that all registered political parties will approach the Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC) at District and State level, as the case may be, for pre-certification of their political advertisements proposed to be issued on electronic media. The Commission has directed to ensure strict compliance of its instructions contained in above said letter.
13. **Control Room-** The 24x7 control room at district level must be activated immediately and sufficient deployment of manpower and other logistics be ensured by the DEO/CEO. A control room with complaint Monitoring Centre would also be set up at ECI Secretariat during the entire election process.

Yours faithfully


(NARENDRA N. BUTOLIA)
SR. PRINCIPAL SECRETARY