ECI ENFORCES MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR 2026 ASSEMBLY POLLS AND BYE-ELECTIONS

The Election Commission of India has announced the schedule for Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and the UT of Puducherry, and bye-elections in Goa (21-Ponda AC), Gujarat (111-Umreth AC), Karnataka (24-Bagalkot AC & 107-Davanagere South AC), Maharashtra (223-Rahuri AC & 201-Baramati AC), Nagaland (28-Koridang (ST) AC) and Tripura (56-Dharmanagar AC).

Following the announcement, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) has come into immediate effect and will remain in force until the completion of elections, applying to all government departments at both Union and State/UT levels.

The Commission has strictly directed that ruling parties must not misuse official position for election campaigning. Ministers are barred from combining official visits with political work and cannot use government machinery, vehicles, aircraft, or personnel for campaign purposes. Equal access must be ensured for all political parties to public spaces such as grounds and helipads, preventing monopoly by the ruling party. Government accommodations may only be allotted to high-security political functionaries under strict conditions, and no political activities are permitted in such premises.

The use of public funds for advertisements showcasing government achievements is strictly prohibited.

Ministers and authorities are prohibited to sanction grants out of discretionary funds from the time elections are announced. Ministers and authorities are prohibited from announcing financial grants, laying foundation stones, making development promises, or carrying out ad-hoc appointments that could sway voters after the election announcement.

A complete ban has been imposed on the transfer of all officials involved in election duties, including Chief Electoral Officers and their Additional/Joint/Deputy Chief Electoral Officers, Divisional Commissioners, District Election Officers, Returning and Assistant Returning Officers, other revenue officials, and police officers such as IGs, DIGs, SSPs, SPs and SDPOs like DSPs and other police officers, deployed for election work. Any prior transfer orders not yet implemented require Commission approval, and the restriction will remain in force until the completion of elections. Transfers on administrative grounds may be allowed only with prior clearance from the Commission.

(Mainodi, IA)