

## AIR Spotlight - Ban on Election rallies in the Election season

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, an interview discussing the “Ban on Election rallies in the Election season” is featured.

### Participants:

1. **Ashok Tandon**, Political Analyst
2. **Ashwini Shrivastava**, Journalist

### Context

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has taken unprecedented steps in banning public rallies, roadshows and any physical campaigning events while announcing the poll schedule of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur.

### Background

- The ECI had a bad experience during the elections in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry held in 2021, large violations of ECI guidelines in the view of COVID-19 pandemic were reported.
- These actions reportedly resulted in the rise of COVID cases and eventually led to the devastating second wave of the pandemic.
- In this view, the ECI has taken stringent measures and has announced bans on physical campaigning events till Jan 22nd.

### ECI Guidelines

- Ban on roadshows, Pad-yatra, cycle/bike/vehicle rally and procession shall till 22 January 2022.
- No physical rally of Political parties or candidates of any other group related to the election shall be allowed till 22 January 2022.
- No rallies or public meetings between 8 pm to 8 am.
- No victory procession after the counting shall be allowed.
- If a candidate or political party violates the guidelines, no further permission shall be given to the concerned candidate/party for rallies, meetings, etc.

### Key Concerns

- Regional and other smaller parties have raised concerns stating that all parties are not equipped to hold virtual meetings and this acts as an advantage to richer parties.
- Despite the stringent measures, violations are reported in these States.
- Few parties have been issued a show-cause notice by the ECI for violating the norms.
- FIR under sections 188, 269, 270, and 341 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and relevant sections under the Epidemic Act have been lodged against the violators.

- It is difficult for the district administration and the police to monitor the adherence of parties and workers to the guidelines.

### **Key Concessions**

- Addressing the concerns of smaller parties, the ECI has allowed a window for indoor meetings with not more than 300 people and less than 50% of the capacity of the halls.
- A maximum of five persons including candidates shall be allowed to do door-to-door campaigning.
- The maximum number of star campaigners for recognized political parties has been fixed at 30 in place of 40, for unrecognized political parties 15 in place of 20.
- The ECI has also revised the poll expenditure limit for state assembly elections,
  - From 28 lakhs previously to 40 lakhs for bigger States.
  - From 20 lakhs to 28 lakhs for smaller States.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the challenges of conducting the elections during the probable third wave of the pandemic, the responsibility of adhering to the guidelines now rests on the political parties and the general public and show the world that India being the largest democracy can hold free and fair elections without disrupting the peace of the society even during such challenging situations.

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