



ECI Revokes Rythu Bandhu Scheme Disbursement

For Prelims: [Model Code of Conduct](#), [Election Commission of India](#), [Rythu Bandhu scheme](#), [PM Kisan Samman Nidhi](#)

For Mains: Role of the ECI in the Evolution of MCC, Model Code of Conduct - Importance in elections and its criticism.

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) has revoked its earlier 'no objection' for the disbursement of funds under **Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme**.

- The move comes amid allegations of violations of the [Model Code of Conduct \(MCC\)](#).

Why did the ECI Reverse Rythu Bandhu Disbursement?

- The ECI gave a 'no objection' for Rythu Bandhu disbursement during the MCC period, like for other existing Central and state government schemes, on the condition that it would not be published for political gains and that the disbursement would not be **during the silence period, i.e. the 48 hours preceding the date of poll**.
 - The scheme, similar to [PM Kisan Samman Nidhi](#), aimed to **assist farmers**, and the government received permission under certain guidelines.
- A speech by a Telangana minister, **publicizing the release of funds** under the Rythu Bandhu scheme **during the elections**, was found to violate the MCC and prompted the ECI's reversal.
- The EC's order directs an immediate withdrawal of permission for Rythu Bandhu disbursement during the MCC.
 - Disbursement is now halted until the MCC in Telangana ceases to apply, potentially impacting farmers' financial aid.

Rythu Bandhu Scheme

- It is a Telangana government initiative that provides **farmers with investment support for agriculture and horticulture crops**.
- The idea is to **reduce the debt burden of the farmers**. As per the scheme, each farmer gets a [Direct Benefit Transfer \(DBT\)](#) of Rs.5,000 per acre each season for the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other requirements.
- Beginning with 50.25 lakh farmers in 2018, when the scheme was launched, the Rythu Bandhu beneficiaries have gone up to 70 lakh.

What is ECI's Model Code of Conduct (MCC)?

▪ About:

- The MCC, is a set of guidelines issued by the ECI, that regulates parties and candidates before elections, aligning with **Article 324 of the Constitution**.
- It empowers the EC to oversee and ensure **fair elections to Parliament and State Legislatures**.
 - It is active from election schedule announcement to result declaration.

▪ MCC for Political Parties and Candidates:

◦ General Conduct:

- Parties and candidates must avoid activities that **create mutual hatred or tension** among different castes, communities, religious, or linguistic groups.
- Criticism of other parties should be **limited to policies, past records, and work, avoiding personal aspects**.
- Appeals to **caste or communal feelings for votes are prohibited**.
- Places of worship should not be used for election propaganda.

◦ Party in Power:

- The MCC incorporated certain restrictions in 1979, regulating the conduct of the party in power.
- Ministers must not combine **official visits with election work** or use official machinery for the same.
- Ministers and authorities **should refrain from granting payments**, announcing financial grants, laying foundation stones, promising projects, making ad-hoc appointments, or **influencing voters in favour of the party in power** from the time elections are announced.
- The party **must avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer** or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections.
- Ministers from the central or state government **should not enter polling stations** or counting places except in their **capacity as candidates, voters, or authorized agents**.

◦ Election Manifestos:

- ECI directs that political parties and candidates must adhere to the following guidelines while releasing election manifestos for any election (Parliament/State Legislatures):
 - Manifestos should align with the Constitution and MCC.
 - Avoid promises that may influence voters unduly.
 - Manifestos should reflect rationale and financial considerations.
- Manifestos shall **not be released during the prohibitory period**, as prescribed under **Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1951**, for single or multi-phase elections.

◦ Meetings:

- Parties must **inform the local police authorities of the venue and time** of any meeting in time to enable the police to make adequate security arrangements.

◦ Processions:

- If **two or more candidates plan processions along the same route**, the political parties must establish contact in advance to ensure that the **processions do not clash**.
- **Carrying and burning effigies representing** members of other political parties is **not allowed**.

◦ Polling Day:

- Only voters and those with a valid pass from the EC are allowed to enter polling booths.
- All authorized party workers at **polling booths should be given suitable badges or identity cards**.
 - Identity slips supplied by them to voters **shall be on plain (white) paper** and **shall not contain any symbol, name of the candidate or the name of the party**.

◦ Observers:

- The EC will appoint observers to whom any candidates may report problems regarding the conduct of the election.

▪ **Legality of MCC:**

- Though the MCC does not have any statutory backing, it has come to acquire strength in the past decade because of its strict enforcement by the EC.
- Certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced through invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the [Indian Penal Code of 1860](#), [Code of Criminal Procedure of 1973](#), and **RPA of 1951**.
- In 2013, the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice **recommended making the MCC legally binding** and recommended that the MCC be made a part of the RPA 1951.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. The Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 3 only

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct. (2022)