



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Political Parties

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Why is in news? ECI to issue digital time vouchers to National & State political parties for campaigning on Doordarshan & All India Radio during elections

Allotment of time to political parties on All India Radio and Doordarshan during election **will now be online.**

The Election Commission of India has amended the existing scheme for the use of Government-owned electronic media by political parties.

This has been done by introducing a provision **to issue digital time vouchers through an Information Technology (IT) platform.**

With this facilitation, the political parties will not be required to send their representatives to ECI/CEO Offices for collection of the time vouchers physically during elections.

This step reflects the Commission's commitment to leveraging technology for the betterment of the electoral process and ease of all stakeholders.

Recognizing the advancements in technology, the Commission has been providing IT based options for interface with political parties. Recently, the Commission also introduced a web portal for online filing of financial accounts by political parties with the Election Commission.

The scheme, which was initially notified on 16th January 1998, holds a **statutory basis under Section 39A of the R.P. Act, 1951.**

It was formulated after extensive consultations with recognized National and State Parties and is **aimed at ensuring equitable access to government-owned electronic media** during elections for campaigning.

Under this Scheme, an equitable base time is allotted to each National Party and Recognized State Party of the state concerned uniformly on DD & AIR and the additional time to be allotted to the parties is decided on the basis of the poll performance of the parties in the last assembly elections from the respective States/UT or in the last general Elections to Lok Sabha, as the case may be.

The actual date and time during which the above telecasts/broadcasts will be made by the authorised representatives of any party is predetermined, by a lot, by the Prasar Bharati Corporation in consultation with ECI and in the presence of political party representatives.

The introduction of an IT-based platform for the processing and distribution of time vouchers to entitled political parties **allows for a more efficient and streamlined process**, enhancing accessibility and ease of use for the political parties.

The **Election Commission of India (ECI) registers political parties** for the purpose of elections and grants them **recognition as national or state parties** on the basis of their poll performance. The other parties are simply declared as **registered-unrecognised parties.**

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As **per the Representation of People Act 1951**, registered political parties, in course of time, can get recognition as 'State Party' or National Party'.

National/State Political Party:

The ECI has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognised as a national/state party in the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order 1968**, as amended from time to time.

A party may gain or lose national/state party status from time to time, depending on the fulfilment of the below mentioned conditions.

Criteria for a Political Party to be recognised as a National Party:

A political party would be considered (if it satisfies any of the below conditions) a national party if:

it is 'recognised' in four or more states as a state party; or

if its candidates polled at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and has at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls; or

if it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states.

The BJP, Congress, CPI(M), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), National People's Party (NPP) and the AAP are the national parties now.

The AAP satisfied the first criteria as it is recognised as a state party in Delhi, Punjab, Goa and Gujarat.

Criteria for a Party to be recognised as a State Party:

To be recognised as a state party, a party need –

At least 6% vote-share in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 MLAs; or

have 6% vote-share in the last Lok Sabha elections from that state and at least one MP from that state; or

At least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats, whichever is more, in the last Assembly elections; or

At least one MP for every 25 members or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha; or

Have at least 8% of the total valid votes in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.

DMK in Tamil Nadu, BJD in Odisha, YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh, RJD in Bihar, TRS in Telangana are the names of some of the state political parties.

Benefits do Recognised Parties Enjoy under the Representation of the People Act 1951:

If a party is recognised as a National and State Party, it is entitled for **exclusive allotment of its reserved symbol to the candidates** throughout the country and within the State respectively in which it is so recognised.

Recognised 'State' and 'National' parties **need only one proposer for filing the nomination**.

They are also entitled for two sets of electoral rolls free of cost at the time of revision of rolls and their candidates get one copy of electoral roll free of cost during General Elections.

Further, they **get broadcast/telecast facilities over Akashvani/Doordarshan** during general elections.

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A recognised National or State party can have a **maximum of 40 “Star campaigners”** and a registered unrecognised party can nominate a **maximum of 20 “Star Campaigners”**.

However, the **travel expenses of star campaigners are not to be accounted for in the election expense** accounts of candidates of their party.