

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/11/2024

Dated: Feb 5, 2024

Press Note

ECI conveys zero tolerance towards use of children in election related work or campaign activities; Issues directives to parties, candidates and election machinery

Political Parties and candidates should refrain from using children in political campaigns and rallies in any manner

In continuation of its earlier directives to parties and candidates to address plummeting levels of campaign discourse and to maintain respectful discourse towards Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), the Election Commission of India has issued strict directives regarding use of children in any election-related activities. Political Parties have been advised not to use children in election campaigns in any form whatsoever including distribution of posters/pamphlets or to participate in slogan shouting, campaign rallies, election meetings, etc. The Commission has conveyed 'Zero Tolerance' towards use of children in any manner during the electoral process by parties and candidates.

The following have been emphasised in the instructions:

- 1. Prohibition of Child Participation in election related activities:** Political parties are explicitly directed not to engage children in any form of election campaign, including rallies, slogan shouting, distribution of posters or pamphlets, or any other election-related activity. Political leaders and candidates should not use children for campaign activities in any manner including holding a child in their arms, carrying a child in a vehicle or in rallies.
- 2.** This prohibition extends to the use of children to create the semblance of a political campaign in any manner including use through poem, songs, spoken words, display of insignia of political party/candidate, exhibiting ideology of political party, promoting achievements of a political party or criticizing the opponent political parties/candidates

However, the mere presence of a child accompanied by their parent or guardian in proximity of a political leader and who is not involved in any election campaigning activity by the political party, will not be construed as a violation of the guidelines.

- 3. Legal Compliance:** All political parties and candidates are required to ensure strict compliance with the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, as amended by the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation)

Amendment Act, 2016. The Commission directives also highlighted the Hon'ble Bombay High Court in its Order dated 4th August, 2014 in PIL No. 127 of 2012 (Chetan Ramlal Bhutada Vs. State of Maharashtra and others) which had stressed the need to ensure that political parties do not allow participation of minor children in any election related activities.

The Commission has unequivocally directed all election officials and machinery to refrain from involving children in any capacity during election-related work or activities. District Election Officers and Returning Officers shall bear personal responsibility for ensuring compliance with all relevant acts and laws pertaining to child labour. Any violation of these provisions by election machinery under their jurisdiction will result in severe disciplinary action.



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