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Model Code of Conduct and Its Implementation in the Bihar Vidhan Sabha Election 2025

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Abstract

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a set of ethical guidelines enforced by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to regulate the behavior of political parties and candidates during elections. In the context of the Bihar Vidhan Sabha Election 2025, the MCC played a crucial role in ensuring free and fair electoral processes. This article examines the scope, specific provisions, enforcement mechanisms, challenges faced, and the overall effectiveness of the MCC in Bihar's 2025 elections.

Keywords: Election Commission of India (ECI), Model Code of Conduct (MCC), Vidhan Sabha Election, Bihar

Introduction

The Election Commission of India is constitutionally mandated to conduct elections in a fair, transparent, and impartial manner. One of the key instruments it uses to ensure this is the Model Code of Conduct, which is enforced from the moment election schedules are announced until the election process concludes. The MCC is not a statute backed by law but a set of moral and ethical guidelines that political parties and candidates are expected to follow. Its purpose is to restrain undue influence, misuse of government machinery, and maintain the sanctity of elections.

In the 2025 Bihar Assembly Elections, the MCC was implemented effectively across the state, impacting campaign strategies, public announcements, and political behavior. It also reflected the ECI's adaptive approach to modern challenges like misinformation and digital campaigning.

Enforcement Timing and Scope

When the Election Commission announced the Bihar election schedule in early October 2025, the Model Code of Conduct came into immediate effect. The MCC applied to all political parties, candidates, and the state government, and even extended to the Union Government regarding announcements and policy decisions related to Bihar during the election period.

The MCC remained in force until the election process concluded—right up to the counting of votes and even post-results to maintain law and order. For instance, in Patna district, the MCC's duration was extended until November 16, 2025, to prevent victory processions and maintain peace during the counting period.

Key Provisions of the MCC in Bihar 2025

The Election Commission enforced several core MCC provisions during the Bihar polls, including:

- All political party hoardings, banners, and posters displayed in public places had to be removed or regulated. Advertisements at public expense or for government schemes were prohibited. Any promotional material had to carry clear identification, and unauthorized political messaging was restricted.
- The MCC prohibited government officials from participating in politically motivated activities. Transfers of government personnel were suspended unless approved by the ECI. Policy announcements or developmental decisions were closely monitored to prevent misuse for electoral advantage.

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- c) Loudspeakers were banned between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Public demonstrations and protests required prior police permission. No political activity, including victory marches, was allowed during the MCC period.
- d) The ECI highlighted MCC applicability to digital content, specifying norms for social media and warning parties against AI-generated synthetic content that could mislead voters.

Implementation Mechanisms:

To ensure effective compliance, the ECI deployed enforcement mechanisms throughout Bihar:

- a) **Flying Squads and Monitoring Teams:** The Commission deployed 824 flying squads consisting of magistrates, police personnel, and videography teams to monitor violations, particularly those reported through the C-Vigil platform. These squads ensured rapid response and complaint resolution within 100 minutes.
- b) **Public Participation and Reporting:** Citizens and political parties were encouraged to report MCC violations via the '1950' helpline and the C-Vigil app. District administrations coordinated with flying squads and standard operating procedures to act against reported irregularities.
- c) **Administrative Coordination:** District Magistrates and Chief Electoral Officers held meetings with political parties to reiterate MCC rules such as criminal record disclosures and campaign expenditure limits.

Challenges and Criticism

Despite active enforcement, several challenges persisted:

- a) **Enforcement Consistency:** Reports emerged on social platforms alleging potential enforcement gaps or inconsistency in addressing certain violations, especially during the early campaign phase.
- b) **Public Perception & Misinterpretation:** Numerous debates emerged about what constituted a real MCC breach, indicating a need for clearer public communication of rules.
- a) **Technology-Driven Misinformation:** Digital platforms and AI-generated content posed new challenges for monitoring and rule adherence.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Model Code of Conduct in the Bihar Vidhan Sabha Election 2025 demonstrated the Election Commission of India's proactive and adaptive approach towards managing electoral ethics and fairness. Through a combination of timely enforcement, monitoring mechanisms, and public reporting tools, the MCC played a pivotal role in managing campaign conduct and safeguarding democratic norms. However, evolving political tactics and digital media influence highlight the need for ongoing refinement of MCC implementation strategies.

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