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States in crisis as parties pledge freebies for votes

Give a man a fish and you provide him a meal but teach him how to fish and you give him a livelihood, goes a saying. As another election season is upon us, it only goes to show how far India is removed from the ideal of creating livelihoods through jobs for all its people in the working age group.

In this highly competitive season of ladling out promises of freebies to win votes, each political party tries to outdo rivals by offering to spend freely from taxpayers' money in handing out incentives that may drain the exchequer but may help garner votes for the netas and their parties.

As Jammu & Kashmir prepares to go to the polls in a historic election 10 years after the last one, the competition for wooing the voters with incentives is fierce. With the Congress promising women ₹3,000 a month besides rations and a phenomenal ₹25 lakh health cover, the BJP is inclined to put it all together in a financial package akin to a basic household expenses cover of ₹18,000 a month to be directly transferred to the eldest woman of a household.

Governments that are doling out incentives aimed at empowering women are moving rapidly towards a financial crisis with some states like Himachal Pradesh struggling even to pay government staff their salaries at the beginning of a month.

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Such a prospect of financial bankruptcy of states that are already swimming against the tide with monthly interest payments running into thousands of crores, however, seems to mean nothing to the netas as they bid for the power to run the states, wooing voters by promising the moon.

As a class, politicians seem impervious to the cost-of-living crisis that the middle class downwards face as sticky inflation rises and rules. It has been pointed out that the gross fiscal deficit of the states is somewhere in the region of Rs 9.4 lakh crores now, having risen to that humongous figure from Rs 3.2 lakh

crores in the last 10 years.

The delivery of free electricity, with a ceiling of around 200 units that may define a lower middle family's consumption in a month, has left most state electricity boards with gaping deficits. Free bus rides for women besides a basic payment per month to them are aimed at ideals like women's empowerment, but they come with a cost.

Of course, everything adds more burden to the deficit in state finances. Throw in all loss-making state ventures and the debt of every Indian adds up to just under \$2,000 per person in the \$2.8 trillion national debt (Central as well as of states, municipalities, public sector institutions and social security funds) as computed at the end of 2022.

The point is this competitive culture of freebies for votes is a political phenomenon that is intrinsically dishonest. That all parties are guilty of it absolves none in this deceptive practice of cash and incentives for votes. It may be practised around the world, but it seems to be done with a competitive zeal in India regardless of the effect on public finances.

Arguing over delivered and undelivered poll promises will get people nowhere. The courts too periodically comment on the freebie culture, but there is no mechanism to curb the politician from proclaiming a passage to the promised land so he can rule, no matter what effect freebies have on the collective wealth of a state.

Back-to-back encounters in J&K ahead of Sept 18 polls

Sanjay Khajuria | TNN

Jammu: Shootouts between security forces and terrorists continued in J&K just three days before the first phase of polling for the assembly elections on Sept 18. After a gunfight broke out in Mendhar sector of Poonch district Sunday morning, another erupted in the afternoon in the remote Nuknali Bani area of Kathua district.

Officials said no casualties have been reported till evening from either operations. "During a search operation, terrorists fired at security forces, leading to a fierce gunfight in Kathua. At least two-three terrorists are suspected to be trapped at the site. Additional troops have been deployed to strengthen the cordon," an official said.

EC may not advance Delhi polls as electoral roll revision is still on

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New Delhi: Election Commission may not be in a position to bring forward assembly polls in Delhi, due in Feb 2025, to Nov as the state is currently witnessing the annual summary revision of electoral rolls along with the rest of the country, with the process set to be completed and the final updated rolls published by Jan 6, 2025.

Sources in EC said pre-revision activities for the countrywide annual summary revision, including in Delhi, had started on Aug 20 and will go on till Oct 18. As per the schedule announced by EC on Aug 7, the integrated draft roll will be prepared between Oct 19 and 28 and published on Oct 29.

Claims and objections may be filed till Nov 28. Following the disposal of claims and objections by Dec 24, the final rolls shall be published by Jan 6.

"Election authorities in Delhi will be pre-occupied with the annual summary rolls revision for the next

three months," an EC functionary said.

That EC had never considered clubbing assembly polls in Delhi with Maharashtra and Jharkhand was evident as it had ordered summary revision of electoral rolls with respect to July 1, 2023, as the qualifying date only in respect of four states — J&K and Haryana where polls are currently underway and Maharashtra and Jharkhand that are likely to go to polls in Nov.

While the term of Maharashtra assembly is due to expire on Nov 26, that of Jharkhand assembly will end on Jan 5. The term of Delhi assembly will end only on Feb 23, 2025. EC is set to announce polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand in the first or second week of Oct. "There is too little time now to add Delhi to the list," an official said.

With the final rolls for Delhi with Jan 1, 2024, as the reference date, due to be published by Jan 6, assembly polls may be announced soon after, said a source.

ஒரே நாடு ஒரே தேர்தல் திட்டம் அமல்படுத்த மத்திய அரசு தீவிரம்

புதுடில்லி, செப். 16-

பிரதமர் நரேந்திர மோடி தலைமையிலான மூன்றாவது ஆட்சி காலத்தில், ஒரே நாடு ஒரே தேர்தல் நடைமுறையை அமல்படுத்த மத்திய அரசு தீவிரமாக உள்ளது.

லோக்சபா தேர்தல் முடிந்து பிரதமர் மோடி தலைமையில் மூன்றாவது முறையாக ஆட்சி அமைந்து, 100 நாட்களை எட்டியுள்ளது.

இந்த ஆட்சி காலத்தில் மேற்கொள்ள வேண்டிய திட்டங்கள் தொடர்பாக இந்த, 100 நாட்களில் ஒவ்வொரு துறையும் ஆலோசனை நடத்தி, தங்களுடைய பரிந்துரைகளை அளித்துள்ளன.

கணக்கெடுப்பு

இது தொடர்பாக அரசு வட்டாரங்கள்கூறியதாவது: பார்லிமென்ட், சட்ட சபை மற்றும் மாநகராட்சி களுக்கு ஒரே நேரத்தில் தேர்தல் நடத்தும் ஒரே நாடு, ஒரே தேர்தல் நடை

கொரோனாவால் ஒத்திவைக்கப்பட்ட மக்கள்தொகை கணக்கெடுப்பை விரைவில் துவங்க முடிவு செய்யப்பட்டுள்ளது

முறையை அமல்படுத்துவது தொடர்பாக, முன்னாள் ஜனாதிபதி ராம்நாத் கோவிந்த் தலைமையிலான குழு, தன் பரிந்துரைகளை அளித்துள்ளது.

இந்த முறையை, இந்த ஆட்சி காலத்துக்குள் அமல்படுத்த மத்திய அரசு மிகவும் தீவிரமாக உள்ளது.

தேர்தல் பிரசாரத்தின் போதும், சமீபத்தில் செங்கோட்டையில் நடந்த சுதந்திர தின விழா உரையின்போதும், பிரதமர் நரேந்திர மோடி இதை வலியுறுத்தினார்.

இது தொடர்பாக, சட்டக் கமிஷன் தன் பரிந்துரைகளை விரைவில்

அளிக்க உள்ளது.

அதைத் தொடர்ந்து, இந்த சட்டப்பூர்வ நடவடிக்கைகள் மேற்கொள்ளப்படும். இந்த ஆட்சி காலத்துக்குள் இதை நடைமுறைப்படுத்தி, 2029 தேர்தலில் அறிமுகம் செய்ய, மத்திய அரசு தீவிரமாக உள்ளது.

கொரோனா பரவல் காரணமாக ஒத்திவைத்த மக்கள்தொகை கணக்கெடுப்பை விரைவில் துவங்கவும் மத்திய அரசு முடிவு செய்துள்ளது.

ரூ.3 லட்சம் கோடி திட்டம்

இந்த 100 நாட்களில் மஹாராஷ்டிராவில் வாத் வான் துறைமுகம் அமைப்பது, 25,000 கிராமங்களில் 62,500 கி.மீ., தொலைவுக்கு சாலை வசதி ஏற்படுத்துவது உட்பட, 3 லட்சம் கோடி ரூபாய்க்கான உட்கட்டமைப்பு வளர்ச்சிப் பணிகளுக்கு ஒப்புதல் அளிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. இவ்வாறு அந்த வட்டாரங்கள் கூறின.