

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 437/TEL-LA/SOU3/2023

Dated 27.11.2023

To

The Chief Electoral Officer,
Telangana,
Hyderabad.

**Subject: General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Telangana, 2023 -
Stoppage of Rythu Bandhu Scheme - Violation of MCC and allied
conditions- Regarding**

Sir,

The Commission had put forth following conditions vide its direction dated 5th October, 2018 while approving release of disbursement under the Rythu Bandhu scheme during General Election to Legislative Assembly of Telangana 2018:-

- (i) No new beneficiaries should be added to list of eligible beneficiaries;
- (ii) No publicity should be made in this regard;
- (iii) No public function should be organised for disbursement of kits/items in kind;
- (iv) No political functionary will be involved in the process of disbursement and;
- (v) As far as possible direct electronic transfer of cash component should be made through the account of the beneficiary and there should be no distribution of cheques in this regard.

2. It is noted that Rabi instalments of Rythu Bandhu assistance were disbursed by the State of Telangana during October-January in last five years and there is neither any fix date(s) of disbursement prescribed in the scheme, nor any special significance of disbursement in the month of November is assigned in design or performance of the scheme.

3. The Govt. of Telangana vide its letter no. 6088/Agri.II (1)/2023 dated 18.11.2023 had informed to the Commission that the disbursement of Rythu Bandhu assistance is proposed from 24th November, 2023 during the MCC period in the ongoing election process in full compliance with the conditions mentioned in the Commission's letter dated 5th Oct, 2018. The Commission vide its letter of even no dated 25th November, 2023 has given `no objection` for disbursement of Rythu Bandhu assistance in the State of Telangana with conditions that the Govt. of Telangana will follow the instructions contained in the Commission's direction vide

its letter dated 5th October, 2018 and no DBT assistance will be affected during silence period and poll day in the State. Above said 'no objection' was granted, based on the premise that the said scheme is an on-going scheme and Rabi instalments were disbursed during October-January in the past five years.

4. Needless to say, that Model Code of Conduct is applicable in the State of Telangana and all concerned are required to comply with the Model Code of Conduct. Relevant para of Model Code of Conduct is as follows:

Para VII. Party in Power

Para 6: From the time of elections are announced by Commission, Ministers and other authorities shall not-

(a) announce any financial grants in any form or promises thereof;

5. The Commission has been now informed vide your letter no. 7022/Elections. A/A1/2023 dated 26.11.2023 that Sh. T. Harish Rao, Minister of Finance and Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Telangana has made statements regarding disbursement of Rythu Bandhu Scheme by a particular time before the date of poll, which is widely reported in newspapers and local media on 26th November 2023. The Commission has observed that Sh T. Harish Rao, Minister of Finance and Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Telangana who is also a contesting candidate sponsored by the BRS Party from 33- Siddipet Assembly Constituency in ongoing GE to LA Telangana 2023, a Star campaigner of the Party and also the Finance Minister of Telangana, has not only violated the provisions of MCC contained in in Para VII of Model Code of Conduct but also conditions laid down as above by publicising the release under the scheme, and thereby disturbed the level playing field in the on-going election process.

6. In the context as above of clear violation of Model Code of Conduct and conditions laid down while granting 'no objection', the Commission has directed that the permission granted vide its letter of even no dated 25th November, 2023 for disbursement of Rabi season instalment under the ongoing Rythu Bandhu scheme during currency of MCC, shall stand withdrawn immediately and there shall be no disbursement under the Scheme till the Model Code of Conduct in the State of Telangana ceases to apply in all its form. The Commission decision shall immediately be conveyed to the Govt. of Telangana and compliance report taken and submitted to the Commission by **15:00 Hours on 27th November, 2023.**

Yours faithfully,



(Avinash Kumar)

Principal Secretary