

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:159

ANSWERED ON:30.07.2015

Working Groups on Election Management

Chavan Shri Ashok Shankarrao;Shinde Dr. Shrikant Eknath

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether several Working Groups were constituted by the Government/ Election Commission after the General Election-2014 to study various aspects of election management and suggest steps for improvement of electoral process;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the terms of reference of such groups;
- (c) whether these groups have submitted their recommendations/suggestions;
- (d) if so, the details thereof along with the reaction of the Government thereto; and
- (e) the follow-up action taken/being taken by the Government/Election Commission on the recommendations/ suggestions of the Working Groups?

Answer

ANSWER

MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE
(SHRI D.V. SADANANDA GOWDA)

(a) to (e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (a) to (e) IN RESPECT OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *159 FOR 30TH JULY, 2015.

(a) to (b): The Election Commission has informed that they had constituted working groups on nine different aspects of the election management with a view to examining the experience gathered during General Election, 2014 and to further improve the election management in future. These include; (1) Electoral Roll and related matters, (2) Election Planning and Management, (3) Electronic Voting Machines and Election materials, (4) Model Code of Conduct, manifestoes and Biennial Elections, (5) Nomination, Qualification and Disqualification, Affidavits and Political Parties, (6) Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) and Media, (7) Information Technology, (8) Statistics, Training, Official languages and Counting, and (9) Election Expenditure Monitoring.

(c) to (e): The Election Commission has informed that recommendations of the working groups encompasses various aspects of the aforesaid talking points discussed by the groups, aimed at further improving the system so as to ensure better election management in future. Some of the recommendations are within the jurisdictions and competence of the Commission, whereas some of them relate to proposals to being in amendments in Laws and/or requiring further debate and discussions at various levels including stakeholders. The Commission has further informed that the recommendations submitted by the working groups are being examined and processed at the Commission level. Based on the merits of the recommendations, the Commission is in the process of taking appropriate action.

LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. 159

FOR REPLY ON 30th JULY, 2015

NAME OF THE MEMBER:- DR. SHRIKANT EKNATH SHINDE

(Party affiliation: Shiv Sena)

SHRI ASHOK SHANKARRAO CHAVAN

(Party affiliation: Indian National Congress)

POSITION: 18th

DRAFT NOTE FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES

SUBJECT: Working Groups on Election Management

QUESTION REPLY

- (a) whether several Working Groups were constituted by the Government/ Election Commission after the General Election-2014 to study various aspects of election management and suggest steps for improvement of electoral process;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the terms of reference of such groups;
- (c) whether these groups have submitted their recommendations/suggestions;
- (d) if so, the details thereof along with the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(e) the follow-up action taken/being taken by the Government/Election Commission on the recommendations/ suggestions of the Working Groups? Reply at Annexure-I and Annexure-II.

The Election Commission, a constitutional body, conducts the largest electoral exercise in the world. It is the responsibility of the Election Commission to organise free and fair election in the country of more than 670 million voters with diverse socio-political and economic backgrounds. In recent years, the role being played by the Election Commission ensures greater participation of people in political affairs. India today is considered as the world's 'largest' democratic country. The success of democracy in India has attracted the attention of almost every political system around the world.

2. The electoral system of our country, which is also called the first-past-the-post system of elections, has completed more than sixty years. We have covered the journey of these past sixty five years with much glory and exemplary successes in all the fields. This has been the result of the relentless toil and continuous struggle of the millions who have shaped the present and the future of this great country with their sweat and blood. Undoubtedly, this journey has not been an easy sail and we have witnessed much turbulence and turmoil during this period. During this period, the political scenario and the electoral process of the country have undergone continuous epoch-making changes. With each election, the complexities of the electoral process and the election management have been increasing. Of late, the Indian polity is witnessing the era of coalition politics, which has put premium on every single seat in the legislative bodies. This has resulted in fierce competition and election mandate has fractured extensively. Every single ballot has proved extremely valuable. In such a scenario, allegations and counter-allegations are extensively made. Extensive inroads by corrupt and criminal elements and the muscle power and money power have posed a very challenging task for the conduct of free and fair elections.

3. The aforesaid scenario, which has been continuously changing, has necessitated reforms in electoral management on several occasions. In the light of the experience gained during elections, recommendations of the Election Commission of India, the proposals from different sources including political parties, eminent men in public life and the deliberations in the Legislatures and various public bodies, the successive Governments have taken a number of measures, from time to time, to bring about electoral reforms aimed at better electoral management and improvement in the election process.

4. In the wake of the General Elections, 2014, as a stock taking measure, the Election Commission set up nine working groups to examine the experience gathered during the Elections and to devise ways and means to further improve election management in future elections. The topics identified were:

- (1) Electoral Roll and related matters,
- (2) Election Planning and Management,
- (3) Electronic Voting Machines and Election materials,
- (4) Model Code of Conduct, manifestoes and Biennial Elections,
- (5) Nomination, Qualification and Disqualification, Affidavits and Political Parties,
- (6) Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) and Media,
- (7) Information Technology,
- (8) Statistics, Training, Official languages and Counting, and
- (9) Election Expenditure Monitoring (Annexure-II).

The working groups have submitted their recommendations which may kindly be seen at Annexure-III. The recommendations of the working groups encompasses various aspects of the aforesaid talking points discussed by the groups, aimed at further improving the system so as to ensure better election management in future. Some of the recommendations are within the jurisdictions and competence of the Commission, whereas some of them relate to proposals to being in amendments in Laws and/or requiring further debate and discussions at various levels including stake-holders. The Commission has further informed that the recommendations submitted by the working groups are being examined and processed at the Commission level. Based on the merits of the recommendations, the Commission is in the process of taking appropriate action.