

EC crackdown: 345 unrecognised parties face delisting; failed to contest polls or verify office locations

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NEW DELHI: In a move aimed at 'cleaning the political space', the Election Commission on Thursday initiated proceedings for delisting 345 registered unrecognised political parties (RUPPs) that had failed to fulfil the statutory obligation of contesting even a single election in the last six years and the offices of which could not be located at the address mentioned in their registration documents.

These 345 RUPPs are registered in different states and Union territories across the country.

The Commission on Thursday said that it had come to its notice that of the over 2,800 RUPPs currently registered with ECI, many have failed to fulfil the essential conditions to maintain their

registration status. "Thus, a nationwide exercise was conducted by the ECI to identify such RUPPs and 345 such RUPPs have been identified till now," EC said in a statement. The review is ongoing and more such 'non-compliant, inactive' RUPPs may face delisting proceedings in the days to come.

The chief electoral officers (CEOs) of the states/UTs where such "defaulter" RUPPs are registered, have been directed to issue show-cause notices, giving an opportunity to such parties to be heard. "The final decision

regarding the delisting of any RUPP shall be taken by the Election Commission of India, based on the CEO's report," said an official.

Political parties (National/State/RUPPs) in the country are registered with the ECI under the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act 1951. Under this provision, any association, once registered as a political party, gets certain privileges and advantages such as tax exemptions amongst others.

EC had in January 2024 made it mandatory for RUPPs to attach a declaration with their application for allotment of common poll symbol, confirming that they have filed their contribution reports and annual audit accounts for the last three financial years and election expenditure statement for the last two polls contested.

Since 2022, the poll panel has delisted 284 defaulting and non-compliant RUPPs and declared 253 RUPPs inactive as part of its efforts to clean up the political space historically occupied by non-functional political parties. These parties were found to be availing benefits like 100% tax exemption on donations received without meeting the statutory requirements under the Representation of the People Act or contesting elections. Some were serving as shell companies or money laundering vehicles, while some others were fielding candidates in elections only to demand money from recognised parties for withdrawing their nomination.