Cash For Votes Culture

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- Cash for votes is a long existing menace in the Indian election scenario.
\n
- An understanding on the factors driving this culture and necessary reforms to address them are vital.
\n

\n\n

What necessitates money in elections?

\n\n

\n
- **Mobilisation** - In reality, cash flows during elections not to buy votes but rather more to support a campaign.
\n
- Generally, parties have weak organisations to mobilise votes at the local level for large constituencies and face heavy institutional constraints.
\n
- Cash is used to engage vote mobilisers or local individuals who will seek votes for a party or a candidate.
\n
- Given these reasons, cash functions as a facilitator for a smooth campaign machinery.
\n
- **Regulations** - The Election Commission (EC) allows only 14 days of official campaigning, which ends 48 hours before the scheduled close of polling.
\n
- Last minute finalisation on nominations for most constituencies puts pressure on candidates to mobilise votes as quickly as possible.
\n
- Given this, spending money on cash, liquor and gifts become essential for the candidate to ensure an army of workers during the campaign period.
\n
- **Power** - Money has become an important symbol of power in a hierarchical society such as India.

\n
- The display of money during elections is now more socially approved in certain ways, is a political necessity, and is born of cultural expectations.
\n
- Voters doubt the efficiency of administration from someone who is not powerful in monetary, political, or familial terms.
\n
- This is evident with the fact that many uninfluential independent candidates lose elections in India.
\n

\n\n

What could be done?

\n\n

\n
- Competitive populism has led to the development of a culture in which political parties are forced to pump cash.
\n
- This is amplified by weak party organisations, limited campaigning periods and the humongous size of constituencies.
\n
- Given these, campaign finance reforms can consider increasing the number of constituencies and the duration of the official campaign period.
\n
- This is more likely to curb the negative influence of money in politics in comparison to putting a cap on the expenditure limit.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

