

SC Order on West Bengal Local Body Polls

Why in news?

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Supreme Court ordered to hold online filing of nominations by candidates for local body polls in West Bengal.

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What are the concerns with West Bengal local body elections?

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- The state was a pioneer in local self-government, yet, over decades, the legitimacy of the polls to panchayats has been undermined by the spectre of violence and intimidation by the ruling parties.

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- This year, over 34 per cent of the seats had only ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidates standing unopposed.

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- There were murders in the run-up to the polls given the fact that the opposition has retreated from the public space.

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- About 1000 candidates from opposition parties were prevented from filing their nomination.

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- Due to this state opposition parties moved court against the alleged excesses of the state government.

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What is SC decision about?

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- Recently Kolkata High Court ordered that nominations for local body elections can be accepted via email.

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- On this regard SC ordered to hold on email nominations and asked the State

Election Commission (SEC) not to declare the results for the seats where the TMC was unopposed.

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- On the one hand, the apex court has recognised that elections to local bodies are a state subject and, constitutionally, their free and fair conduct falls under the ambit of the SEC.

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What is the significance of the recent decision?

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- SC considered allowing e-nominations would cause “irreparable loss and injury”, implying as it does a failure of the SEC and state government’s machinery to prevent the intimidation of opposition candidates.
- SC also stated that the local elections seem to have become a display of muscle power and subversion by the ruling party.
- The SC order is both a warning and an opportunity for the state government and the SEC.
- These elections will be clearly watched, and the administration must not allow subversion of the democratic process.
- The Court has placed its trust on the SEC to ensure a peaceful transition of office for representatives closest to the people.

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Source: Indian Express

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