

Shadow workers are tracking poll spend by political parties

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District admin forms special squad to check expenditure on rallies and campaigns With the Assembly elections around the corner, the district administration of Pune has formed a special squad of 'shadow party workers' to keep a check on the actual money spent on rallies and campaigns. It has been observed that political parties have increasingly been going all out and spending large amounts of money to win elections. However, parties and candidates may not truthfully reveal the actual amount spend on paper to the Election Commission of India. To counter this, these shadow workers will mix with actual party workers in similar attire at various rallies and across campaigns to get real figure of expenses. These shadow workers will also maintain a register to keep track.

The authorities will later compare their findings with the figure submitted by candidates. The squad will mostly keep track of the expenses on meals and vehicles in rallies as it has been noted that the most malpractice happens under these two heads. Talking to Pune Mirror, district collector Naval Kishore Ram said, "We had managed to catch misleading information in the last Lok Sabha elections. The flying squad will enter in rallies and meetings and get real picture of expenses." "We have given all the freedom to our officers to find this data," he added. An officer part of the squad said, "We have decided not to rely only on video shooting by the administration or the details sent by candidates themselves. Our special team will conduct an independent audit of election expenditure during the poll campaign." "The expenditure limit is restricted to Rs 28 lakh as per the EC. We noticed that the cost of a pandal and rallies reached to Rs 20 lakh in a day if any big leader arrives. There is a menu and nonvegetarian meals are provided. The items in the meals also vary. We will note all these minor details and submit to the authorities," said another member of squad. "Many party workers or the crowd during the mega rallies are actually daily wage labourers brought from various labour camps. These expenses are never shown," the officer added. For Reprint Rights: timescontent.com

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