



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

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18th Lok Sabha & Four Vidhan Sabha Elections Held in 2024

Funds Raised and Spent on Election Campaigns

Trend Analysis for 22 Political Parties¹

Introduction

More than eight months have passed since the completion of the elections to the 18th Lok Sabha held in 2024. Elections to the Vidhan Sabhas in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim were conducted simultaneously. However, there is very little reporting about how much money was spent on those elections. Occasional media reports have covered macro-level expenditure data of one or two major political parties since November 2024. But we do not have a comprehensive picture of the kind of funds which political parties spent on those elections. A prominent media watch organisation estimated the expenditure to be around ₹1.5 lakh crores. Election analysts have labelled this as speculation due to the non-disclosure of the methodology adopted to arrive at that figure.

However, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has put in place systems and procedures requiring political parties to submit a detailed statement of the expenditure incurred on their election campaigns, pursuant to directions issued by the Supreme Court of India in 1996 in the matter of *Common Cause vs Union of India & Ors.*, (AIR 1996 SC 3081). Every recognised National and State Political Party must submit its full expenditure statement within 90 days of the completion of elections to the Lok Sabha and 75 days of completion of elections to the Vidhan Sabhas in the States and Union Territories (UT). These expenditure reports are displayed on the ECI's website. This reporting is in addition to the statutory requirement for contesting candidates to submit their campaign expenditure details to the District Election Officer as per Section 77 of *The Representation of the People Act, 1951*.

In this study we have analysed the **full expenditure statement** submitted to the ECI by **22 political parties** which contested the Lok Sabha and the four Vidhan Sabha elections. They are currently displayed on the ECI's website. The names of these 22 political parties along with their abbreviations used in this study are given below:

No.	Political Party
1	Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)
2	Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)

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3	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)
4	All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen (AIMIM)
5	All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC)
6	All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF)
7	Biju Janata Dal (BJD)
8	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
9	Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS)
10	Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
11	Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M)
12	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)
13	Indian National Congress (INC)
14	Janata Dal (Secular) [JD(S)]
15	Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)]
16	Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) [LJP(RV)]
17	Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)
18	Samajwadi Party (SP)
19	Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF)
20	Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM)
21	Telugu Desam Party (TDP)
22	Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP)

According to ECI's Statistical reports, a total of 53 national and state level political parties contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Another 690 unrecognised but registered political parties are shown as having participated in the elections. Despite the prescribed filing deadline, the full expenditure statements of several prominent political parties such as the Communist Party of India, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Jammu Kashmir National Conference, Jammu Kashmir People's Democratic Party, the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party and the Shiva Sena and Shiromani Akali Dal **are not accessible on the ECI's website, at the time of writing this report**. Perhaps they have not been submitted yet or the ECI is scrutinising them before uploading them on its website.

Nevertheless, this study covers the campaign expenditure incurred by the 22 political parties for the 1,595 candidates they fielded from various constituencies. 480 of them were elected to the 18th Lok Sabha. This is more than 88% of the 543 candidates who were elected. Additionally, parties like the BJP, INC, BSP, and CPI(M) also fielded candidates for the Vidhan Sabha elections in the four States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim. This study covers their statements of the expenditure incurred on those Vidhan Sabha elections also.

A brief explanation of the expenditure statement reporting format is required to understand what kind of detailing political parties provide to the ECI. Part-A of the reporting format covers the income, fund mobilisation and expenditure incurred by a political party at the headquarters level. Part-B of the format covers similar details at the level of every State and

UT. Part-C of the format contains the totals of Part-A and Part-B figures in summary form. Part-D contains the verification of the authenticity of the accounts by the concerned chartered accountant. Parts-A & B are also accompanied by more than 20 schedules which must be filled up to provide details of the expenditure incurred.

The findings from the current study are segmented according to the following items of income and expenditure which the 22 political parties filled out in the reporting format submitted to the ECI:

Segment	Parameters of the Study
I.	<i>Opening Fund Balance (cash and bank deposits)</i>
II.	<i>Funds raised during the election period (cash and cheque)</i>
III.	<i>Total expenditure incurred on the campaign</i>
IV.	<i>Total expenditure incurred on candidates</i>
V.	<i>Lumpsum handed over to candidates</i>
VI.	<i>Expenditure on the travel of star campaigners and other party leaders</i>
VII.	<i>Expenditure on media advertisement</i>
VIII.	<i>Expenditure on social media and virtual campaigning</i>
IX.	<i>Expenditure on publicity materials</i>
X.	<i>Expenditure on public meetings, processions and rallies</i>
XI.	<i>Expenditure on publishing candidates' criminal antecedents through the media</i>
XII.	<i>Other kinds of expenditure on party propaganda</i>
XIII.	<i>Closing funds position (cash and bank balance)</i>

Major Findings

The major findings from this study are given below:

- Overall, the 22 political parties covered by this study had **₹18,742.31 crores** at their disposal for spending on their election campaigns. This amount includes the funds they had in their kitty at the time of announcement of the elections and the donations they managed to raise during the election period;
- Collectively these political parties spent as much as **₹3,861.57 crores** during the campaign period;
- Between the dates of announcement of the election schedule and the completion of elections, these political parties raised as much as **₹7,416.31 crores**. BJP raised **84.5%** of the total amount received by the 22 political parties in the form of donations. Parties like **INC (₹22.14 crores)** and **CPI(M) (₹18.85 crores)** declared the highest figures for cash donations. **BJP raised only ₹1.24 crores** by way of cash donations;

- BJP declared a total election expenditure of **₹1,737.68 crores**. In other words, BJP incurred **a little more than 45%** of the total campaign expenditure declared by the 22 political parties. Out of this, its expenditure incurred on the four Vidhan Sabha elections was **₹41.01 crores**. A comparative picture vis-à-vis other political parties and their success rate at the hustings is given in **Segment #III** below;
- Media advertisement (excluding social media) constituted the single largest item of expenditure. These political parties collectively claimed spending **₹992.48** crores on making payments to print and electronic media platforms including cable and other TV channels and purchase of bulk smses;
- The expenditure on social media and virtual campaigning totalled up to **₹196.23 crores**. It must be noted that only seven of the 22 political parties, namely the BJP, INC, BJD, DMK, JD(U) declared incurring expenditure on this item;
- Expenditure on the travel of star campaigners (more often than not by aircraft and helicopters) constituted the next big item at **₹830.15 crores**;
- These political parties collectively spent **₹398.49 crores** on publicity materials such as posters, banners, badges, stickers, arches, gates, cutouts, hoardings, flags etc. They also spent **₹130.06 crores** on organising public meetings during the campaign period;
- These political parties spent **₹26.69 crores** advertising the criminal antecedents of their candidates through the print and electronic media, pursuant to the repeated directives of the Supreme Court of India followed by the ECI's guidelines on the subject;
- At the completion of the poll process, the 22 political parties had a total of **₹14,848.46 crores** (including cash-in-hand and money held in bank accounts and fixed deposits) remaining in their custody after covering all election-related expenditure; and
- Six of the 22 political parties actually ended up with more funds in their kitty at the end of elections than what they had on the date of announcement of the elections. BJP took the lion's share of this surplus. See **Table 15** at **Segment #XIII** below.

Detailed Findings

I. Opening Fund Balance

The 22 political parties had a total of **₹11,322.67 crores** (**₹145.88 crores in cash and ₹11,180.12 crores in bank accounts**) in their kitty on the date of the announcement of the election schedule. See **Table 1** below for the party-wise breakup.

- **BJP topped the list** with **₹5,921.81 crores** followed by **BRS** following as a distant second with **₹1,519.86 crores** (with barely a fifth of the funds controlled by the

BJP) and **BJD** taking third place with **₹809.64 crores**. At **ninth place**, **INC** barely managed to remain within the top-10 list with **₹262.86 crores**;

Table 1

Rank	Political Party (in descending order)	Total Funds (in Rs.) (cash and bank deposits)	Rank	Political Party (in descending order)	Total Funds (in Rs.) (cash and bank deposits)
1	BJP	5,921,81,64,165	13	YSRCP	42,54,54,863
2	BRS	1,519,86,11,687	14	SKM	29,55,42,485
3	BJD	809,64,13,008	15	RJD	20,60,16,037
4	BSP	627,95,89,131	16	JD(S)	10,96,61,682
5	DMK	458,17,75,587	17	AIMIM	9,00,70,322
6	AITMC	403,35,30,038	18	AAP	3,32,53,721
7	SP	378,67,38,559	19	SDF	3,21,89,424
8	AIADMK	281,45,73,761	20	LJP(RV)	27,41,425
9	INC	262,86,82,606	21	AGP	20,32,781
10	TDP	207,22,84,206	22	AIUDF	12,99,280
11	CPI(M)	175,94,68,037	Total		11,326.01 crores
12	JD(U)	159,19,52,934			

- **LJP(RV)** (₹27.41 lakhs), **AGP** (₹20.32 lakhs) and **AIUDF** (₹12.99 lakhs) figure at the bottom of this list.

The **cash-in-hand and bank deposit figures** (inclusive of funds in bank accounts and fixed deposits) declared by the 22 political parties is given in **Table 2** below.

Table 2

Rank	Political Party	Cash-in-hand (amount in Rs. in descending order)	Rank	Political Party	Bank deposits (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	123,80,37,839	1	BJP	5,798,01,26,326
2	SP	8,29,33,397	2	BRS	1,519,85,35,070
3	INC	6,76,38,048	3	BJD	809,42,76,470
4	CPI(M)	3,20,24,253	4	BSP	625,86,27,250
5	BSP	2,09,61,881	5	DMK	458,17,75,587
6	SDF	61,20,802	6	AITMC	403,05,06,051
7	AITMC	30,23,987	7	SP	370,38,05,162
8	LJP-RVP	23,70,644	8	AIADMK	281,42,18,367
9	BJD	21,36,538	9	INC	256,10,44,558
10	JD(U)	11,07,614	10	TDP	207,22,77,132
11	RJD	8,00,000	11	CPI(M)	172,74,43,784
12	YSRCP	5,96,228	12	JDU	159,08,45,320
13	AAP	5,33,897	13	YSRCP	42,48,58,635
14	AIADMK	3,55,394	14	SKM	29,55,42,485
15	AIUDF	91,858	15	RJD	20,52,16,037
16	BRS	76,617	16	JDS	10,96,61,682
17	TDP	7,074	17	AIMIM	9,00,70,322

18	AGP	0
19	AIMIM	0
20	DMK	0
21	JD(S)	0
22	SKM	0
Total		145.88 crores

18	AAP	3,27,19,824
19	SDF	2,60,68,622
20	AGP	20,32,781
21	AIUDF	12,07,422
22	LJP(RV)	3,70,781
Total		11,180.12 crores

- **BJP** declared that it had **₹123.80 crores** cash-in-hand before the start of elections. **SP** came a distant second with only **₹8.29 crores** cash-in-hand. **INC** with **₹6.76 crores** took the third spot.
- **AGP, AIMIM, DMK, JD(S) and SKM** declared **zero cash** at the start of the elections;
- **In terms of funds lying in banks (including fixed deposits) BJP** declared **₹5,798.01 crores** followed by **BRS** with **₹1,591.85 crores** and **BJD** with **₹809.42 crores**. **INC** was at **ninth place** with only **₹256.10 crores** in its bank accounts a lot lesser than the amounts declared by **BSP, DMK, AITMC, SP and AIADMK**;
- **AIUDF and LJP(RV)** declared only **₹12.07 lakhs** and **₹3.70 lakhs** respectively as money held in their bank accounts.

II. Funds raised during the election period

As mentioned in the major findings above, between the dates of announcement of the election schedule and the completion of elections, the 22 political parties raised a total of **₹7,416.31 crores** for the purpose of meeting election expenditure.

- **BJP** raised a little more than **₹6,268 crores** during the election period. This amounts to **84.5% of the total sums donated to the 22 political parties during this period**. **INC**, coming in a distant second managed to raise only **₹571.73 crores** which is **7.71% of the total** amount. **YSRCP** took the third spot raising **₹171.22 crores (2.31% of the total)**. **TDP** raised **₹107.93 crores** which was **1.46% of the total**. Of the **remaining parties**, each raised **less than 1%** of the total amount mentioned above;
- **BSP** is the only party which declared that it **did not raise any funds** during the election period but dipped into the **₹627.95 crores** which it already had in its kitty to meet the poll expenditure. See **Table 2 in Segment #1** above. **SKM** raised a meagre **₹11.72 lakhs**- the lowest among 22 political parties;
- Only **three parties** raised **significant amounts** of money in the form of **cash donations**. As mentioned in the segment on major findings above, **INC topped** the list with **₹22.14 crores** followed by **CPI(M)** raising **₹18.85 crores** in cash. **BJP** raised only **₹1.24 crores** worth of cash donations;

- **Only four other political parties**, namely **AAP, AIADMK, AIMIM, SP** declared raising donations in the form of cash. None of the remaining parties declared receipt of donations in cash.

See **Table 3** below for the party-wise breakup of funds raised in cash and by way of cheque and demand draft.

Table 3

Rank	Political Party	Total funds raised <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>	Cash Receipts	Receipts through Cheque & Demand Draft
1	BJP	6,268,00,61,566	1,24,30,324	6,266,76,31,242
2	INC	571,73,45,165	22,14,23,293	549,59,21,872
3	YSRCP	171,22,31,858	0	171,22,31,858
4	TDP	107,93,07,927	0	107,93,07,927
5	CPI(M)	62,74,20,596	18,85,00,713	43,89,19,883
6	BJD	60,00,00,000	0	60,00,00,000
7	BRS	47,56,92,082	0	47,56,92,082
8	AITMC	33,12,12,545	0	33,12,12,545
9	DMK	26,50,13,868	0	26,50,13,868
10	JDU	19,52,62,100	0	19,52,62,100
11	LJP-RV	11,06,55,100	0	11,06,55,100
12	AIADMK	11,03,10,927	29,475	11,02,81,452
13	SP	10,47,24,786	1,97,280	10,45,27,506
14	AAP	6,89,58,285	1,23,200	6,88,35,085
15	SDF	3,54,20,300	0	3,54,20,300
16	RJD	1,76,13,423	0	1,76,13,423
17	AIUDF	97,20,005	0	97,20,005
18	AGP	87,99,976	0	87,99,976
19	AIMIM	62,20,048	9,23,391	52,96,657
20	JDS	60,00,000	0	60,00,000
21	SKM	1,17,2826	0	11,72,826
22	BSP	0	0	0
Total		7,416.31 crores	42.36 crores	7,373.95 crores

The data collated above depicts the enormous disparity between the political parties in terms of access to funds from donors. When compared with **Table 1** above, **Table 3** shows even greater disparity in the ability of political parties to raise funds during elections.

III. Total expenditure incurred on the campaign

As stated in the major findings above, the 22 political parties covered by this study collectively spent **₹3,861.57 crores** over their election campaigns. **Table 4 below** shows the amounts of total expenditure declared by these political parties of which the expenditure on candidates is a sub-set.

- As stated in the major findings above, the largest campaign expenditure on the election campaign to the Lok Sabha and the four Vidhan Sabhas of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim was declared by the **BJP at ₹1,737.68 crores**. In other words, BJP incurred **about 45%** of the total campaign expenditure declared by the 22 political parties. Out of this, the declared expenditure on the four Vidhan Sabha elections was a meagre **₹41.01 crores**. It contested **441 Lok Sabha seats but won in only 240**. In AP it won eight of the ten seats it contested. In Odisha it contested in 147 seats and won 78 to form the government. It lost all 38 seats it contested in Sikkim. In Arunachal Pradesh it contested 60 of the Vidhan Sabha seats and won 46 out of which 10 candidates were elected unopposed;

Table 4

Rank	Political Party	Total Campaign Expenditure (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	1,737,68,62,935
2	INC	686,19,31,195
3	BJD	415,21,25,164
4	YSRCP	328,36,60,046
5	DMK	161,07,91,393
6	AITMC	147,68,57,385
7	BRS	120,14,58,239
8	BSP	72,07,19,099
9	SP	48,39,75,875
10	TDP	35,66,69,036
11	JD(U)	31,37,65,206
12	CPI(M)	26,35,92,871
13	AIADMK	23,54,12,285
14	RJD	8,71,52,891
15	AAP	8,21,29,270
16	SDF	3,55,38,426
17	JD(S)	2,27,46,157
18	AIUDF	1,56,28,200
19	AGP	1,26,45,600
20	LJP(RV)	1,11,23,545
21	AIMIM	63,51,781
22	SKM	45,65,719
Total		3,861.57 crores

Rank	Political Party	Total Expenditure on Candidates (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	245,29,04,282
2	BJD	138,19,32,721
3	INC	66,05,12,456
4	AITMC	36,30,46,919
5	BRS	16,88,17,588
6	DMK	15,40,00,000
7	CPI(M)	9,75,38,156
8	JD(U)	8,78,75,464
9	SP	6,33,56,859
10	BSP	5,88,17,187
11	YSRCP	2,69,16,233
12	TDP	1,40,75,301
13	AGP	1,22,49,600
14	JD(S)	1,20,00,000
15	LJP(RV)	1,10,34,300
16	AAP	78,76,607
17	AIMIM	59,75,108
18	SKM	45,65,719
19	SDF	38,70,600
20	RJD	30,24,864
21	AIADMK	20,10,878
22	AIUDF	17,46,214
Total		559.41 crores

- INC** declared that it incurred **₹686.19 crores** on its election campaign for the Lok Sabha and the four Vidhan Sabhas. In other words, **this was less than 40% (39.20%) of what the BJP spent**. INC's expenditure on the Vidhan Sabha elections cannot be ascertained as the party submitted a consolidated set of accounts for the parliamentary and assembly elections held simultaneously. It had fielded **309 candidates but only 99 could make it to the Lok Sabha**. It contested **159 seats in**

AP and lost all of them. In Odisha it contested in all 145 seats but won in only 14 of them. It lost all 12 seats it contested in Sikkim. In Arunachal Pradesh it managed to win only one of the 20 Vidhan Sabha seats;

- **Interestingly BJD spent as much as ₹415.21 crores on its campaign for the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha seats in just one state of Odisha. This is more than 60% of the total expenditure incurred by the INC which had more candidates in the hustings for the Lok Sabha across the country and the four Vidhan Sabhas. Nevertheless, BJD ended up losing power in the Odisha Vidhan Sabha winning only 51 of the 147 seats it contested. It lost all 21 Lok Sabha seats that it contested.** BJD's expenditure on the Odisha Vidhan Sabha elections cannot be ascertained as the party submitted a consolidated set of accounts to the ECI;
- **YSRCP comes fourth among the top campaign spenders at ₹328.63 crores. It also lost power in the Andhra Pradesh Vidhan Sabha and managed to win only four of the 25 Lok Sabha seats it contested. YSRCP's expenditure on the Andhra Pradesh Vidhan Sabha elections cannot be ascertained as the party submitted a consolidated set of accounts to the ECI. It contested in all 175 seats but won only 11 of them;**
- **DMK came fifth in terms of overall declared spending with ₹161.07 crores followed by AITMC with ₹147.68 crores. While DMK won all 22 Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu, AITMC won 29 of the 47 Lok Sabha seats it contested in West Bengal (42), Assam (4) and Meghalaya (1);**
- **TDP declared spending only ₹35.66 crores on its election campaign but it won 16 of the 17 Lok Sabha seats it contested and rode to power with a landslide victory with 135 of the 175 seats it contested in the AP Vidhan Sabha, TDP's expenditure on the Andhra Pradesh Vidhan Sabha elections cannot be ascertained as the party submitted a consolidated set of accounts to the ECI;**
- **On the other hand, BRS declared spending ₹120.14 crores on its campaign for 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. This is more than 2.5 times what TDP spent on its Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha election campaign in AP. Nevertheless, BRS lost all in all the constituencies where its candidates contested.;**
- **SP reported spending ₹48.39 crores on its election campaign for 62 Lok Sabha seats. It won 37 of them. However, its rival BSP declared spending ₹72.07 crores on its election campaign to the Lok Sabha and the Odisha Vidhan Sabha. It fielded 488 candidates in the Lok Sabha elections across the country- much more than any other party had nominated, but lost in all constituencies. It claimed spending only ₹16.90 lakhs on the 147 candidates it nominated for the Odisha Vidhan Sabha seats. This works out to an average of ₹11,497 per candidate;**

- The **best success rate (100%)** was that of **LJP(RV)** among the 22 political parties. It claimed spending **₹1.11 crores** on the Lok Sabha election campaign. It **won all five seats** which contested;
- A high success rate was scored by **JD(S)** as it **won two of the three Lok Sabha seats** it contested with a **declared spending of only ₹2.27 crores**;
- **AIMIM** reported spending only **₹63.61 lakhs** on the **14 Lok Sabha seats** which it contested in Telangana, Maharashtra, Bihar and Jharkhand but **managed to win only one** seat in Telangana;
- **JD(U)** declared spending **₹31.37 crores** on its campaign. It put up **16 candidates** and **managed to win 12 seats**. Its main rival **RJD** claimed spending only **₹8.71 crores** on its campaign. **Only four of its 24 candidates were successful**;
- **CPI(M)** is said to have spent **₹26.35 crores** on the elections for the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Out of this, it incurred a total expenditure of **₹9.75 crores** on the Vidhan Sabha elections. It fielded **29 candidates but managed to win only four seats** in the Lok Sabha. **CPI(M)** fielded **eight candidates** in the AP Vidhan Sabha elections all of whom lost. In **Odisha** it fielded **seven candidates** but **only one** of them was **successful**;
- **AAP** claimed spending **₹8.21 crores** on the Lok Sabha elections contesting from **four seats in Delhi, 13 in Punjab, two each in Gujarat and Assam and one in Haryana**. It managed to win **only three seats- all in Punjab**;
- **AIADMK** declared spending **₹23.54 crores** on the election campaign for **36 Lok Sabha seats but could not win any**;
- **SDF** reported spending **₹3.55 crores** on the campaign for the **lone Lok Sabha seat and 32 Vidhan Sabha seats in Sikkim**. It managed to win **only one seat in the Vidhan Sabha**. Its main rival **SKM** spent a meagre **₹45.65 lakhs** on its campaign but won the **lone Lok Sabha seat and 31 of the 32 seats in the Vidhan Sabha**.

IV. Total expenditure incurred on candidates

The 22 political parties collectively incurred a total expenditure of **₹559.41 crores** on the candidates they put up for the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha elections in the four States. This is a sub-set of the total campaign expenditure whose trends are analysed in the segment immediately above. This total figure includes lumpsum payments made to the candidates, expenses incurred on their public meetings and rallies and publicity materials apart from publishing details of their criminal antecedents in newspapers and broadcasting them through TV channels. Unlike other political parties INC included only lumpsum payments and expenses incurred on publicising the criminal antecedents of its candidates in this category. However, in Part-C of its expenditure report submitted to ECI, INC mentions identical figures under the total overall expenditure incurred on its election

campaign and that which was spent on its candidates specifically. So, the data displayed in the **second part of Table 4 above** has been collated from Part-B of its expenditure reports submitted for all States and UTs.

- **BJP** declared that it spent the highest amount of **₹245.29 crores** on its candidates which is **almost 44%** of the total spend declared by the 22 political parties. **BJD** takes **second place** with a declared spending of **₹138.19 crores** exclusively on its candidates followed by **INC** which spent **₹66.05 crores** under this category;
- **AITMC** said it spent **₹36.30 crores** on its candidates followed by **BRS** with a declared expenditure of **₹16.88 crores** and **DMK** with **₹15.40 crores** under this category;
- **AIUDF** (₹17.46 lakhs) and **AIADMK** (₹20.10 lakhs) declared the smallest amounts of expenditure under this category.

V. Lumpsum handed over to candidates

In addition to incurring expenditure at the central and state level political parties also handed over certain sums of money to their official candidates to spend on campaigning. Collectively the 22 political parties declared an expenditure of **₹402.12 crores** under this category. The party-wise breakup is given in **Table 5** below.

Table 5

Rank	Political Party	Lumpsum given to candidates (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	172,98,36,596
2	JD(U)	85,00,00,000
3	BJD	53,83,06,420
4	AITMC	36,00,00,000
5	BRS	16,15,00,000
6	DMK	15,40,00,000
7	CPI(M)	8,26,99,686
8	SP	5,92,15,000
9	INC	3,53,00,000
10	AGP	1,22,49,600
11	JDS	1,20,00,000
12	LJP(RV)	1,08,00,000
13	AAP	60,25,000
14	AIMIM	53,08,861
15	SKM	20,00,000
16	AIUDF	10,00,000
17	SDF	10,00,000
18	AIADMK	0
19	BSP	0
20	RJD	0

21	TDP	0
22	YSRCP	0
Total		402.12 crores

- **BJP** declared the largest amount of funds i.e., almost **₹173 crores** handed over to candidates as a lumpsum to meet campaign expenditure. As stated in earlier segments, Part-B figures for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned documents. So, the final figures might be much higher than what we have been able to collate;
- **JD(U)** takes second spot with a declared handout of **₹85 crores** to its candidates followed by the **BJD** with **₹53.83 crores** taking third place;
- **AITMC** said it had handed over **₹36 crores** to its candidates while **BRS** declared giving **₹16.15 crores** under this category followed by **DMK** with a lumpsum payment made to the tune of **₹15.40 crores** to its candidates;
- **CPI(M)** and **SP** reported handing out **₹8.26 crores** and **₹5.92 crores** respectively. **INC** took ninth place with a declared handout of **₹3.53 crores** only to its candidates;
- Reported lumpsum payments from the **AGP, JD(S) and LJP(RV)** to their candidates totalled more than **₹1 crore each**. **AAP** declared giving only a total of **₹60.25 lakhs** as lumpsum payments to the candidates it fielded in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Assam;
- **AIUDF** and **SDF** declared the smallest amount of payment made under this category at **₹10 lakhs each**;
- **AIADMK, BSP, RJD, TDP** and **YSRCP** claimed that had not transferred a single **paisa** to their candidates as lumpsum payments.

VI. Expenditure on the travel of star campaigners and other party leaders

Expenditure on the travel of star campaigners to canvas support for their party candidates accounted for the **second largest item of expenditure** declared by the 22 political parties at **₹830.15 crores**. However, the actual figure might be higher because complete details of BJP's expenditure in this category are not calculable for the reason explained immediately below this paragraph. In most cases the high expenditure was due to the hiring of aircraft and helicopters for these star campaigners. Some parties like the CPI(M) declared road journey as the mode of travel for several of their star campaigners. Additionally, these 22 political parties said to have spent a sum of **₹24.08 crores** on the **travel of other party leaders** during the election campaign. **Table 6** below provides an overview of the expenditure declared by these political parties:

- **BJP was the top spender** in both categories with **at least ₹389.24 crores** reported to have been spent on the travel of its star campaigners and **₹12.26 crores** on that of other party leaders. However, these figures are partial because BJP's expenditure under this category is not calculable for the States of Goa, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. The expenditure details in Part-B of the reporting format as uploaded on the ECI's website are not legible because the scanning of the hard copy documents has resulted in pixellation of the text. Part-C summary sheet does not contain the total figure under this category of expenditure. Nevertheless, despite these incomplete figures BJP's accounts for **more than 47% of the star campaigners' travel expenditure** collectively declared by the 22 political parties. **This party's declared spend on the travel of its other leaders amounts to more than 50% of the spend collectively declared by the 22 political parties;**
- **The name BJP's top star campaigner, namely Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not figure in the expenditure list.** Presumably, the expenditure on his air travel was borne by the Union Government given the constitutional position he occupies. However, the BJP's detailed list of expenditure under this category contains the names of several senior members of his Cabinet as well as Chief Ministers of States where they are in power;

Table 6

Rank	Political Party	Expenditure on Star Campaigners (amount in Rs. in descending order)	Rank	Political Party	Expenditure on other party leaders (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	389,24,82,411	1	BJP	12,26,22,921
2	YSRCP	241,42,07,150	2	RJD	7,57,18,720
3	BSP	58,61,41,200	3	SP	1,34,36,829
4	AITMC	46,25,14,969	4	INC	1,14,24,009
5	BJD	25,46,16,137	5	CPI(M)	73,83,820
6	SP	22,56,64,624	6	BJD	71,21,464
7	TDP	13,87,97,341	7	DMK	12,45,195
8	JD(U)	11,23,03,293	8	SDF	10,52,552
9	INC	8,10,92,933	9	JD(U)	6,09,000
10	DMK	5,44,62,961	10	AIADMK	1,52,397
11	BRS	3,30,64,573	11	AIUDF	54,920
12	AAP	2,78,67,034	12	AAP	0
13	AIUDF	1,07,31,486	13	AGP	0
14	CPI(M)	42,28,127	14	AIMIM	0
15	JD(S)	29,92,480	15	AITMC	0
16	AIADMK	2,86,800	16	BRS	0
17	AIMIM	1,18,900	17	BSP	0
18	AGP	0	18	JD(S)	0
19	LJP(RV)	0	19	LJP(RV)	0
20	RJD	0	20	SKM	0

21	SDF	0
22	SKM	0
Total		830.15 crores

21	TDP	0
22	YSRCP	0
Total		24.08 crores

- **YSRCP takes second spot in the star campaigners' travel expenses category with a reported spending of ₹241.42 crores followed by BSP with ₹58.61 crores;**
- **AITMC reportedly spent ₹46.25 crores on the travel of its star campaigners while BJD claimed spending ₹25.46 crores on this item. SP declared spending ₹22.56 crores in this category. Interestingly, even TDP (₹13.87 crores) and JD(U) (₹11.23 crores) are said to have outspent INC (₹8.10 crores) in this category;**
- **The lowest spend on this item was declared by AIMIM (₹1.18 lakhs) and AIADMK (₹2.86 lakhs);**
- **AGP, LJP(RV), RJD, SDF and SKM declared that they had not spent a single paisa in this category;**
- **While BJP (₹12.26 crores) topped the list in terms of declared expenditure incurred on the travel of other party leaders for campaigning, RJD (₹7.57 crores) took the second spot. Notably it reported that it had not spent any money on the travel of its star campaigners. SP and INC spent a little more than ₹1 crore each on this item;**
- **CPI(M) declared spending ₹73.83 lakhs on the travel of other party leaders. This is more than the amount declared as travel expenses for their star campaigners;**
- **Only 11 parties declared incurring expenditure under this category while the rest declared 'Nil' expenditure for the travel of other party leaders for the purpose of campaigning. AAP, BSP, BRS, AITMC, TDP and SKM are some of these parties declaring 'Nil' expenditure in this category. See Table 6 above.**

VII. Expenditure on media advertisement

As mentioned in the major findings presented above, media advertisement incurred by the 22 political parties on their own and for the candidates they nominated, constituted the single largest item of expenditure during the elections. Collectively these parties spent **₹992.48 crores** on advertising through the print and electronic media, including cable TV, satellite-based TV channels and websites and buying bulk smses for the purpose of voter outreach. However, the actual expenditure might be much higher because the detailed figures declared by BJP in Part-B of its expenditure report for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned images uploaded on the ECI's website.

As the expenditure declared by these 22 political parties on virtual campaigning, including the use of social media, is required to be categorised separately in their expenditure reports, those spending details are discussed separately in the next segment. Similarly, the expenditure incurred on publishing the criminal antecedents of the contesting candidates through the print and electronic media is declared as a separate category in the reporting formats. So, this item is also not included in the category of media advertisement expenditure analysed under this segment of our report. Therefore, the media spend totals which these 22 parties have declared in Part-C of their respective expenditure reports may not always not match with the figures we have collated below. **Table 7** below contains the party-wise breakup of expenditure incurred solely on media advertisement during the election campaign:

Table 7

Rank	Political Party	Media Advertisement (excluding social media) <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>
1	BJP	684,57,20,051
2	YSRCP	87,36,02,376
3	DMK	73,75,86,630
4	BJD	47,14,83,102
5	AITMC	36,30,46,919
6	AIADMK	22,67,57,816
7	INC	12,09,30,854
8	CPI(M)	10,89,77,433
9	BRS	10,51,05,000
10	TDP	2,65,34,000
11	JD(U)	1,62,24,741
12	SDF	1,56,64,950
13	JD(S)	64,95,810
14	RJD	28,17,840
15	SP	23,60,000
16	AIUDF	9,40,800
17	AAP	4,73,135
18	LJP(RV)	62,500
19	SKM	55,000
20	AGP	0
21	AIMIM	0
22	BSP	0
Total		992.48 crores

- **BJP topped the list incurring at least ₹684.57 crores of reported expenditure on media advertisement.** However, in Part-C of its expenditure report, this party declared incurring only ₹58.45 lakhs on media advertisement. This seems to be an error because this figure is tiny compared to the **₹611.50 crores** shown as media advertisement **expenses incurred by the party headquarters in Part-A** of the reporting format. So, we have collated the media advertisement expenses

mentioned in Part-B formats filled up by the BJP for the States and UTs to arrive at the figure of ₹684.57 crores. Even this figure is incomplete because, figures declared by BJP in Part-B of the reporting format for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned images uploaded on the ECI's website. Presumably the party's expenditure on media advertisement might have exceeded ₹700 crores. **Despite being incomplete, BJP accounted for more than two-thirds (almost 69%) of the expenditure** collectively declared by the 22 political parties;

- **YSRCP takes second spot** in this category of declared expenditure also with **₹87.36 crores, followed by DMK with ₹73.75 crores. BJD reported spending ₹47.14 crores** taking the **fourth place** with AITMC coming in fifth with a declared media spend of **₹36.30 crores**;
- **INC reported spending only ₹12.09 crores** falling behind **AIADMK** which declared media expenditure of **₹22.67 crores**. **TDP said it had spent only ₹2.65 crores-** much less than **CPI(M)'s ₹10.89 crores** and **BRS's ₹10.51 crores**;
- **SKM declared spending the least** on media advertisement at **₹55,000** while its **main rival SDF** is said to have spent almost **thrice that figure i.e., ₹1.56 crores**;
- **AAP declared spending less than half (₹4.73 lakhs)** of what **AIUDF spent (₹9.40 lakhs)** on media advertisement in one State i.e., Assam despite AAP also contesting in that State in addition to Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat;
- **BSP, AIMIM and AGP declared 'nil' expenditure in this category.** It is strange that these parties declared that they did not spend a paisa on media advertisement despite contesting the elections. BSP had the highest number of candidates contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

VIII. Expenditure on social media and virtual campaigning

The ECI's expenditure tabulation formats provide for separate reporting of spending data under the general media advertisement and social media categories. Nevertheless, some of the political parties have included social media spend figures in their general media advertisement expenses. In such cases we have segregated the two so that the spending on social media can be ascertained specifically. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the total expenditure on general media advertisement has been reduced by the amount spent on social media wherever applicable.

It is common knowledge that social media platforms and virtual campaigning methods have caught the attention of many political parties in recent years. It is also well known that the BJP has been a trailblazer in the use of this medium of outreach to the electorate. However, the expenditure figures for the 2024 Lok Sabha and simultaneously conducted Vidhan Sabha elections in four States portray a different picture. See **Table 8** below for the party-wise expenditure declared under this category.

- Only **seven of the 22 political parties** declared expenditure on social media and virtual campaigning platforms totalling **₹196.23 crores**;

Table 8

Rank	Political Party	Social Media and Virtual Campaign Activities <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>
1	BJD	83,03,04,012
2	DMK	50,26,35,652
3	INC	47,69,28,614
4	JD(U)	7,43,40,000
5	BJP	6,94,45,495
6	AAP	86,96,014
7	CPI(M)	45,002
Total		196.23 crores

- **BJD was the top spender** with a declared figure of **₹83.03 crores**. **DMK took second place** with a reported spend of **₹50.26 crores** in this category followed by **INC** with a declared spend of **₹47.69 crores**. **JD(U)** came a **distant fourth** with a reported spend of **₹7.43 crores**;
- Surprisingly, **BJP's** declared expenditure on social media and virtual campaigning totalled up to only **₹6.94 crores relegating it to the fifth spot**. Even this data had to be collated from the spending figures reported for the States and UTs in Part-B of the reporting format. The party **declared 'nil' expenditure from its headquarters (as found in Part-A of the expenditure report)** and no collated data for this category of spending was provided in Part-C of the expenditure report. As stated in earlier segments, Part-B of the reporting format, figures for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned documents. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that the social media spend in these States would have added so significantly as to surpass top spenders like the BJD, DMK or even its main rival- the INC;
- While **AAP** said it had spent almost **₹87 lakhs** on social media and virtual campaigning, the **CPI(M)** declared spending only **₹45,002** during the campaign.

IX. Expenditure on publicity materials

Election campaigning requires the distribution of publicity materials prepared by political parties for the purpose of voter outreach. These include not merely copies of their manifestoes or banners or page-long printed pleas to voters as the urban intelligentsia might presume. Publicity materials also include items such as posters, badges, stickers, arches, temporary gates, cutouts, hoarding and flags of various sizes. The total expenditure on this item was **₹398.49 crores**. Some of the parties split this category of expenditure between funds spent by the party and money spent by their candidates. We

have combined this data for the purpose of this study. See **Table 9** below for party-wise details of declared expenditure under this category.

- **BJP** declared spending almost **₹179 crores** on publicity materials. This amounted to more than **45% of the total expenditure collectively declared by the 22 political parties** under this category. However, Part-C of BJP's expenditure report mentions only **₹7.37 crores** as the total expenditure incurred on this item. This is a fraction of the **₹55.75 crores** spent by BJP's party headquarters as mentioned in Part-A of its expenditure report. As stated in earlier segments, Part-B figures for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned documents. So, the final figures might be much higher than what we have been able to collate;
- At second place, **INC** reported spending **₹73.72 crores** which is **less than half of what the BJP spent**. **YSRCP** took the **third spot** with a declared expenditure of **₹47.89 crores** under this category;

Table 9

Rank	Political Party	Expenditure on Publicity Materials <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>
1	BJP	178,95,08,287
2	INC	73,72,26,058
3	YSRCP	47,89,27,078
4	BRS	34,68,26,860
5	BJD	32,73,11,795
6	AITMC	11,91,62,468
7	BSP	6,06,30,669
8	TDP	5,72,19,809
9	CPI(M)	2,06,56,093
10	SP	1,52,27,957
11	JD(U)	1,27,39,360
12	RJD	55,91,467
13	AAP	52,71,417
14	SDF	43,61,781
15	AGP	22,49,600
16	AIUDF	18,59,200
17	AIADMK	1,86,233
18	AIMIM	0
19	DMK	0
20	JD(S)	0
21	LJP(RV)	0
22	SKM	0
Total		398.49 crores

- **BRS** and **BJD** reported spending more than **₹30 crores** each under this category with **AITMC** declaring a spend of only **₹11.91 crores**;

- **RJD, AAP, SDF and AGP** reported spending between **₹20-55 lakhs** each under this category whereas **AIADMK** claimed spending less than **₹2 lakhs**;
- **AIMIM, DMK, JD(S), LJP(RV) and SKM** declared '**nil**' expenditure under this category. Who footed the bill on publicity materials for these parties is a question that must be probed;
- **BJP** declared distributing wristbands, sky balloons, play cards, mugs, voter slips, ballot paper samples as publicity materials. **The party also claimed distributing T-shirts, mufflers, patkas (headscarves) and even keyrings, bindis, sarees, 'dupattas', 'gandhi caps' and 'Modiji masks' across the country as publicity materials.** Part-B of the expenditure report for some of the States and UTs also mention these items. **AAP** also declared expenditure on T-shirts distributed as publicity materials;
- Interestingly ECI's 2019 [Manual on Model Code of Conduct](#) states very clearly, **"...supply of main apparels like saree, shirt etc. by party/candidate is not permitted."** (para 13.4, page 96). 'Sarees' and 'T-shirts' are amongst campaign materials that are required to be seized by the flying squads because they constitute items of inducement or bribery of voters. Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) report to the ECI about the quantity of such materials seized and their monetary value on a daily basis during the campaign period. How did the ECI allow the distribution of such items as permissible publicity materials is a big question. For the party to boldly mention them as items of legitimate expenditure is even more intriguing. What action will the ECI take against the party remains to be seen.

X. Expenditure on public meetings, processions and rallies

Organising public meetings, processions and rallies are crucial for canvassing support for any political party and its candidates. Public meetings and rallies are mobilizational techniques required for conveying a party's views, contents of manifesto and assurances to the electorate. The 22 political parties collectively spent **₹130.06 crores** on public meetings, rallies and processions. Some of the parties spilt this category of expenditure between funds spent by the party and money spent by their candidates. We have combined this data for the purpose of this study. **Table 10 below** shows the party-wise breakup of expenses declared under this category.

- **BJP topped the list** with a declared expenditure of **₹45.20 crores** on holding public meetings, rallies and processions. This figure has been calculated based on the sums declared in Part-A and Part-B of the expenditure report for various States and UTs because the figure indicated in Part-C is only **₹29.62 crores**. As stated in earlier segments, Part-B figures of its report for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned documents. So, the final figures might be much higher than what we have been able to collate. The party also declared an additional spending of **₹32.88**

crores on organising meetings and rallies where its star campaigners participated. So, the total spend of the BJP under this category amounts to **₹78.08 crores**, subject to the caveat about non-availability of data for Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra because the scanned images are pixellated;

- **BRS took second place** with a stated expenditure of **₹20.37 crores**;
- **BJD takes the third spot** with a declared expenditure of almost **₹11 crores** under this category. **INC** declared spending a little less than **₹7 crores**. However, this figure has been calculated based on the sums declared in Part-A and Part-B of the expenditure report for various States and UTs because the figure shown in Part-C of its expenditure report is only **₹29.52 lakhs**;

Table 10

Rank	Political Party	Public Meetings/Rallies/Processions related Expenses <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>
1	BJP	78,08,26,661
2	BRS	20,37,14,212
3	BJD	10,96,01,233
4	YSRCP	8,64,32,132
5	INC	6,90,10,779
6	BSP	1,51,05,593
7	AAP	1,15,35,834
8	SDF	83,88,543
9	CPI(M)	77,82,863
10	AIADMK	33,58,988
11	SKM	25,10,179
12	JD(S)	8,79,867
13	SP	6,81,862
14	AGP	3,96,000
15	DMK	2,84,030
16	LJP(RV)	1,71,800
17	AIMIM	0
18	AITMC	0
19	AIUDF	0
20	JD(U)	0
21	RJD	0
22	TDP	0
Total		130.06 crores

- **CPI(M)** and **SDF** reported spending **less than ₹1 crore each** under this category whereas **SKM** said it had spent a **little more than ₹25 lakhs**;
- **JD(S), SP, AGP, DMK and LJP(RV)** declared spending between **₹1-9 lakhs each** on meeting-related expenses;

- **AITMC, JD(U), RJD, TDP, AIMIM and AIUDF declared ‘nil’ expenditure under this category.** However, the national and state-level media reported on public meetings held by these parties. How were the expenses covered on such events? Was it left to the candidates to foot the bill or is this a case of lackadaisical reporting? The ECI must probe these intriguing claims as well.

XI. Expenditure on publishing candidates’ criminal antecedents through the media

Pursuant to the Supreme Court’s 2018 directives, the ECI requires every political party to publish details of the criminal antecedents, if any, of its nominated candidates in newspapers widely circulated in the locality where they are contesting. It is also required to disseminate such information through TV channels as well as upload those details on its website. The 22 political parties collectively spent **₹26.69 crores** under this category even though they invariably show this item as part of the campaign expenditure incurred for their candidates. **Table 11 below** shows the party-wise breakup of expenses declared under this category.

Table 11

Rank	Political Party	Publishing candidates’ criminal antecedents through the media (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	9,06,69,709
2	BSP	5,88,17,187
3	INC	3,30,38,984
4	YSRCP	2,69,16,233
5	TDP	1,40,75,301
6	BJD	1,25,59,483
7	BRS	73,17,588
8	CPI(M)	67,43,513
9	SP	41,41,859
10	AITMC	30,46,919
11	RJD	30,24,864
12	SDF	25,00,000
13	AIADMK	20,10,878
14	AAP	10,07,367
15	AIMIM	6,66,247
16	JD(U)	3,75,464
17	AGP	0
18	AIUDF	0
19	DMK	0
20	JD(S)	0
21	LJP(RV)	0
22	SKM	0
Total		26.69 crores

- **BJP** topped the list of parties by declaring expenditure of a little more than **₹9 crores** i.e., **one third of the total spend declared by the 22 political parties** under this category. As stated in earlier segments, Part-B of the expenditure report figures for the States of Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra are not legible due to the pixellated nature of the scanned documents. So, the final figures might be much higher than what we have been able to collate;
- **BSP** reported spending a little more than **₹5.88 crores** taking **second place followed by INC** with a declared expenditure of more than **₹3.30 crores**;
- **TDP and BJD** reported spending between **₹1.25-1.50 crores each** under this category;
- **JD(U)** declared the **lowest spend** in this category at **₹3.75 lakhs**;
- **AGP, AIUDF, DMK, JD(S), LJP(RV) and SKM** declared 'nil' expenditure under this category.

According to the winning candidates' financial and educational profile and their criminal antecedents, where applicable, [compiled by the Association for Democratic Reforms](#), **13 of the 22 winning candidates from the DMK have declared criminal cases in their election affidavits** at the time of filing nominations. Of these, **two are said to have been convicted by the competent courts**. Similarly, **two candidates each from the JD(S) and LJP(RV) who were elected to the Lok Sabha had declared criminal cases pending** against them in their election affidavits. **Nevertheless, these three parties declared that they did not spend a single paisa to publish the criminal antecedents** of these candidates and any others who might have contested and lost. Has the ECI questioned them about their non-compliant status vis-à-vis the 2018 Supreme Court directives and the ECI's guidelines, yet? This is a question that the ECI must answer and the three political parties must explain why they failed to declare expenditure under this category.

XII. Other kinds of expenditure on party propaganda

Apart from the specific categories of expenditure mentioned above, the reporting format includes a catch-all category for reporting funds spent on items other than those specifically listed above. The 22 political parties have included expenditure incurred on communication expenses, general travel, lodging and refreshment expenses of party workers, conducting surveys and market research, developing advertisements, legal expenses for lawyers hired, fuel expenses for vehicles used, general administrative expenses, rent for hiring premises for campaign offices and holding preparatory and review meetings. They declared collectively spending **₹279.57 crores** under this category. **Table 12 below** shows the party-wise breakup of expenses declared under this category.

- **YSRCP** topped the list in terms of this expenditure category by declaring **₹160.35 crores**. This is **57.36% of the total spending** incurred by the 22 political parties. **BRS** declared incurring **₹34.39 crores** under this category taking the second spot.

BJP declared only **₹25.89 crores** as ‘other’ expenditure while **BJD** reported **₹21.88 crores taking third and fourth places** respectively. **SP and TDP** are the only other parties which declared **incurring expenditure above ₹10 crores** each under this category;

Table 12

Rank	Political Party	Other kinds of expenditure on party propaganda <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>
1	YSRCP	160,35,75,077
2	BRS	34,39,30,007
3	BJP	25,89,87,052
4	BJD	21,88,88,798
5	SP	16,32,47,744
6	TDP	12,00,42,585
7	INC	2,28,83,934
8	AAP	2,12,32,435
9	CPI(M)	2,09,17,335
10	JD(U)	1,21,73,347
11	DMK	65,76,925
12	SDF	22,00,000
13	JD(S)	3,78,000
14	AIUFD	2,95,580
15	AIMIM	2,57,773
16	LJP(RV)	89,245
17	BSP	24,450
18	AGP	0
19	AIADMK	0
20	AITMC	0
21	RJD	0
22	SKM	0
Total		279.57 crores

- **INC** declared spending only **₹2.28 crores** under the ‘others’ category followed by **AAP and CPI(M)** declaring spending above **₹2 crores each**. **JD(U)** is the only other party whose expenditure under this category exceeded **₹1 crore**;
- **DMK** declared paying **₹45 lakhs** to a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India under this category;
- **BSP** spent the least amount (**₹24,450**) in this category;
- **AGP, AIADMK, AITMC, RJD and SKM** declared ‘nil expenditure under this category.

XIII. Closing funds position

The closing funds position declared by the 22 political parties has been taken from Part-C of their expenditure reports submitted to the ECI. As shown in the major findings above, the 22 political parties declared being left with a total of **₹14,848.46 crores (₹187.35 crores in cash and ₹14,662.11 crores in bank accounts)** after the completion of elections. See **Table 13** below for the party-wise breakup of balance funds (including cash and bank accounts).

Table 13

Rank	Political Party	Total fund balance (includes cash and bank balance) <i>(amount in Rs. in descending order)</i>
1	BJP	10,107,19,26,491
2	BRS	1,449,22,54,791
3	BJD	625,07,48,532
4	BSP	587,55,19,865
5	SP	340,82,74,238
6	DMK	338,99,98,062
7	AITMC	298,42,94,153
8	TDP	272,64,46,623
9	AIADMK	265,50,58,734
10	CPI(M)	184,00,64,768
11	JD(U)	147,79,44,740
12	INC	133,97,73,247
13	YSRCP	27,67,51,401
14	SKM	21,60,68,950
15	RJD	15,39,66,124
16	LJP(RV)	10,22,72,980
17	JD(S)	9,00,00,322
18	AIMIM	8,879,0,040
19	SDF	3,97,93,149
20	AAP	1,26,49,871
21	AIUDF	16,59,185
22	AGP	4,37,109
Total		14,848.46 crores

- **BJP topped the list** with lion's share of declared balance funds to the tune of more than **₹10,107 crores** at the close of elections. This is more than two thirds (**68.07%**) of the funds which the 22 political parties retained collectively;
- **BRS came a distant second** declaring a balance of almost **₹1,450 crores** at the close of elections followed by **BJD** with a little more than **₹625 crores**. Despite contesting the greatest number of Lok Sabha seats and losing every one of them, BSP declared unspent funds to the tune of **₹587.55 crores**;
- **SP and DMK** declared unspent balance funds of between **₹338-340 crores each** upon the completion of elections;

- **AITMC, TDP and AIADMK** declared that they were left with between **₹265-300 crores each** in their kitty at the close of elections;
- **INC was at 12th place** on this list with a balance of **₹133.97 crores** after the completion of elections;
- AGP declared having the lowest fund balance at **₹4.37 lakhs** at the close of elections.

See **Table 14** below for the balance funds in cash and bank accounts declared by the 22 political parties.

Table 14

Rank	Political Party	Total cash balance (amount in Rs. in descending order)	Rank	Political Party	Total bank balance (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	153,04,32,471	1	BJP	9,954,14,94,020
2	INC	19,70,21,152	2	BRS	1,449,07,63,864
3	SP	7,92,51,304	3	BJD	624,97,11,343
4	CPI(M)	3,42,37,011	4	BSP	586,18,36,463
5	BSP	1,36,83,402	5	DMK	338,99,98,062
6	AITMC	36,39,043	6	SP	332,90,22,934
7	JD(U)	32,92,768	7	AITMC	298,06,55,110
8	SDF	31,96,619	8	TDP	272,64,39,549
9	AAP	26,86,957	9	AIADMK	265,42,52,766
10	LJP(RV)	20,97,244	10	CPI(M)	180,58,27,757
11	BRS	14,90,927	11	JD(U)	147,46,51,972
12	BJD	10,37,189	12	INC	114,27,52,095
13	AIADMK	8,05,968	13	YSRCP	27,61,44,213
14	YSRCP	6,07,188	14	SKM	21,60,68,950
15	RJD	16,000	15	RJD	15,39,50,124
16	AIUDF	11,266	16	LJP(RV)	10,01,75,736
17	TDP	7,074	17	JD(S)	9,00,00,322
18	AGP	0	18	AIMIM	8,87,90,040
19	AIMIM	0	19	SDF	3,65,96,530
20	DMK	0	20	AAP	99,62,914
21	JD(S)	0	21	AIUDF	16,47,919
22	SKM	0	22	AGP	4,37,109
Total		187.35 crores	Total		14,662.11 crores

- Interestingly, the ranking of parties with regard to the cash balance they declared does not match with the ranking vis-à-vis their declared bank balances. While the **BJP** declared a cash balance of a little more than **₹153 crores**, topping this list, **INC came a distant second** with a declared cash balance of only **₹19.70 crores** followed by **SP** with **₹7.92 crores**;

- **TDP** declared the **least amount of cash (₹7,074 only)** at the end of elections while AIUDF (₹11,266) and RJD (₹16,000) took the **second and third place at the bottom** of the ranking.
- **AGP, AIMIM, DMK, JD(S) and SKM** declared 'nil' cash balance at the close of elections;
- In terms of bank balance, **BJP topped** the ranking again with a declared bank balance Of more than **₹9,954 crores** at the completion of the elections. **BRS** declared a bank balance of more than **₹1,449 crores** followed by **BJD** with more than **₹624 crores** and **BSP** with more than **₹586 crores**;
- **DMK and SP** declared bank balance of more than **₹330 crores each** with **AITMC** a tad behind declaring a bank balance of **₹298.06 crores**;
- **INC took the 12th place** with a little more than **₹114 crores** in the bank, **ranking behind JD(U)** which declared more than **₹147 crores** in its bank accounts;
- **AGP** declared the **lowest bank balance** of only **₹4.37 lakhs** at the completion of elections. AIUDF (₹16.47 lakhs) and AAP (₹99.62 lakhs) made up the **second and third rank** from the bottom;
- **Six of the 22 political parties actually ended up with more funds in their kitty** at the end of elections than what they had on the date of announcement of the elections. Obviously, they spent less than the funds they already had at the start of the elections and what they managed to raise during the campaign period. See **Table 15** below for the details.

Table 15

Rank	Political Party	Total fund balance before the start of elections (includes cash and bank balance) (amount in Rs.)	Total fund balance after the completion of elections (includes cash and bank balance) (amount in Rs.)	Difference (amount in Rs. in descending order)
1	BJP	5,921,81,64,165	10,107,19,26,491	4,185,37,62,326
2	TDP	207,22,84,206	272,64,46,623	65,41,62,417
3	CPI(M)	175,94,68,037	184,00,64,768	8,05,96,731
4	IJP(RV)	27,41,425	10,22,72,980	9,95,31,555
5	SDF	3,21,89,424	3,97,93,149	76,03,725
6	AIUDF	12,99,280	16,59,185	3,59,905

- **BJP** declared having **₹5,921.81 crores** in its kitty at the start of the electoral process. After spending in a big way on its campaign it ended up with more than

₹10,107 crores in its kitty at the completion of elections- a surplus of more than **₹4,185 crores**;

- **TDP** reported more than **₹207 crores** in its kitty but ended up with **₹272.64 crores** after spending on its campaign- a surplus of more than **₹65 crores**. Similarly, **CPI(M)** declared starting its election campaign with more than **₹175 crores** and reported closing the campaign with more than **₹184 crores** in its kitty- a surplus of **₹8.05 crores**;
- **LJP(RV)** claimed having only **₹27.41 lakhs** in its custody at the start of the elections but declared ending up with **₹10.22 crores** in its kitty after the completion of elections- a surplus of almost **₹10 crores**;
- **SDF** declared ending its campaign with a surplus of more than **₹76 lakhs** despite losing in all but one Vidhan Sabha seat in Sikkim. **AIUDF** declared a surplus of **₹3.59 lakhs** at the completion of the elections.

Conclusion

These findings from our study throw up several questions which require answers. **First**, as stated above, the total expenditure collectively declared by the 22 political parties is **₹3,861.57 crores**. Compare this with the figure of **₹8,889 crores** which the ECI declared on **18th May, 2024** as the total value of the seizures of items such as cash, liquor, drugs and psychotropic substances, precious metals such as gold, diamonds and jewellery and freebies such as sarees, dhotis, T-shirts, until that date, after the operation of the model code of conduct commenced. In its [2024 Lok Sabha Election Atlas](#) which the ECI released last month (February 2025), the total value of these seizures has been calibrated upwards to **₹10,106.20 crores**. Cash seizure was to the tune of **₹1,066.59 crores**, liquor (6.04 crore litres) worth **₹906.80 crores**, freebies worth **₹2,226.55 crores** and precious metals worth **₹1,486.34 crores**. Drug seizures were valued at **₹4,419.91 crores**.

So, the total worth of the illicit materials that were seized by flying squads and static surveillance teams is at least 2.5 times more than the collective election expenditure declared by the 22 political parties. It is anybody's guess as to how much of similar materials might have escaped seizure and seeped into the electoral process to illegitimately influence voters' choice. It appears that the 'legitimate' expenditure which these parties have declared alone were not responsible for deciding the election outcomes. What is urgently required to test the veracity of the expenditure reports filed by these political parties is access to the four periodic reports which the ECI-appointed election expenditure observers filed from each constituency during these elections. Unfortunately, these are not publicly available. This author's RTI application for the proactive disclosure of this information was rejected by the ECI in 2024 itself. Public pressure must be mounted for the proactive disclosure of these reports.

Second, last year, this author was able to get hold of district-wise data about the registration of first information reports (FIRs) by the police in the case of seizures of illicit materials in Karnataka. The CEO's office replied to an RTI application stating that 40,006 FIRs had been filed across the State. How many of these have reached the prosecution stage and how many were closed due to lack of evidence is not known yet. Similar data about action taken post seizures is not available for most of the other States and UTs. Public pressure must be mounted for the voluntary disclosure of these details.

Third, our study points to the discrepancies in the reports filed by some of the national political parties which have not yet been corrected. Some of the State parties have omitted disclosure of crucial information such as expenditure on publishing the criminal antecedents of their candidates. The ECI's response to such omissions is not known. Further, some parties have declared zero spending or miniscule expenditure under categories such as public meetings and rallies and publicity materials. This is difficult to believe. What methodology has the ECI deployed to ascertain the veracity of the contents of these expenditure reports is not known publicly. We also do not know how many times the ECI has reminded non-compliant political parties about the requirement of filing such expenditure reports. Public pressure must be mounted for the *suo motu* disclosure of all these official records.

Fourth, even if one were to accept the contents of the expenditure reports filed by the 22 political parties as a true statement of facts and figures, this information alone provides enough material to revive the debate on election campaign financing and expenditure. If one political party corners the lion's share of donations and contributions and is able to spend in a very big way, there is no level playing field for the other parties. This amounts to potentially gaining undue advantage at the hustings. **It puts a big question mark on the freeness and fairness of these elections.** Alternatives such as State-funding for political parties and capping donations to political parties must be discussed again and measures must be put in place to ensure a level playing field for all political parties.

Last but not the least, the findings presented above, must not be treated as the last word on the subject and that no further analysis is possible or required. There is a lot of potential for doing a deeper analysis of the spending patterns of various political parties, both geographically and thematically. Of course, the data indicates that splurging on the election campaign is no guarantor of success. The expenditure patterns of several political parties whose reports were analysed above bear testimony to the fact that more money spent is not always equal to more seats won. We hope not only election watchers but also political parties will use these materials to make an internal assessment of what went wrong with their spending strategies and learn from the several success stories that emerged in June 2024 when the results were announced.
