

## **Mission Shakti Speech and Model Code of Conduct**

### **Why in news?**

The Election Commission (EC) has concluded that PM Modi's [Mission Shakti](#) Speech did not violate the [Model Code of Conduct](#) (MCC).

### **What is the dispute?**

- India recently carried out a successful anti-satellite missile test (ASAT), Mission Shakti.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced this achievement through a nationally televised address.
- Opposition parties had accused the PM of violating the Model Code by publicizing the test as a significant achievement of the ruling BJP.
- CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury had formally complained to the EC.
- There were questions about the timing of the test as well as the manner of announcement, as the country is in election mode.

### **What is the MCC mandate in this regard?**

- Part VII of the Code covers provisions regarding the conduct of “party in power”.
- The party in power cannot use public money to publicise achievements ahead of elections.
- So it calls for avoiding the misuse of "official mass media" during the election period for partisan coverage of political news.
- Also, publicity regarding achievements with a view to "furthering the prospects" of the party in power should be avoided.

### **What is the EC's decision?**

- A five-member committee was formed by the Election Commission to look into this.
- The committee held that there was no “misuse of official mass media”.
- This is because Doordarshan and AIR took the feed from a news agency, and more than 60 channels did the same.
- So technically, the party in power did not use the public money (official mass media) to publicise achievements ahead of elections.

- The committee thus concluded that the announcement was not in violation of the Model Code of Conduct.

### **Is the argument valid?**

- As a landmark achievement in defence research, Mission Shakti deserved a public pronouncement at a high level.
- But letting the DRDO explain the achievement first would have served the purpose, rather the PM announcing it himself.
- This perceivably violates the limit on “furthering the prospects” of the ruling party by the nature of the publicity given to the achievement.
- Moreover, the practice of using a private agency to record the announcement and then sharing it with official media hardly serves any purpose.
- As the legal maxim goes, what cannot be done directly cannot be done indirectly either.
- Given these, the committee's conclusion remains a narrow technical view.
- In reality, it is a thin line that divides the idea of making a high-level declaration of a defence capability from using it for electoral advantage.
- So going by the MCC's spirit than its letter, it is possible to conclude that the act did violate the code.

**Source: The Hindu, NDTV**

