Polity & Governance · GS - II

Examine how expenditure limits and mandatory election-expense disclosures can strengthen transparency and accountability in Panchayati Raj elections. Identify the challenges in their effective enforcement.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 23/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Electoral transparency, expenditure ceilings, candidate accountability, State Election Commission, grassroots democracy, money power, expenditure monitoring, disclosure mechanisms, enforcement and disqualification

Model Answer

Introduction

Free and fair local elections are essential for grassroots democracy. Expenditure limits and mandatory financial disclosures, such as the reported requirement for Rajasthan's sarpanch candidates to submit election-expense accounts, seek to improve transparency and restrict excessive influence of money in electoral competition.

Significance of Election-Expense Regulation

1. **Level playing field:** Expenditure ceilings can prevent financially powerful candidates from gaining an unfair advantage over candidates with limited resources.

2. **Transparency:** Detailed accounts of campaign expenditure help voters and election authorities examine how candidates finance their campaigns.

3. **Accountability:** Mandatory submission of expenditure statements creates a formal record and enables action against violations.

4. **Electoral integrity:** Monitoring spending can help identify undisclosed expenditure, inducements and attempts to influence voters through money.

5. **Institutional credibility:** Effective enforcement strengthens public confidence in Panchayati Raj elections and local democratic institutions.

Challenges in Enforcement

1. **Undisclosed spending:** Cash transactions, third-party expenditure and informal campaign activities can make accurate monitoring difficult.

2. **Verification capacity:** Local election authorities may face shortages of personnel, resources and technical expertise.

3. **Awareness gaps:** Candidates may lack clarity regarding permissible expenditure heads, documentation and submission deadlines.

4. **Uneven enforcement:** Inconsistent monitoring and delayed action can weaken the deterrent effect of regulations.

Way Forward

1. Introduce standardised digital expenditure registers and simplified reporting formats.
2. Conduct regular audits and provide clear guidelines to candidates.
3. Strengthen independent monitoring and accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms.
4. Ensure proportionate penalties and timely decisions after giving candidates an opportunity to respond.

Conclusion

Election-expense regulation is essential for protecting democratic competition at the grassroots level. Transparent reporting, credible verification and consistent enforcement can reduce money power and strengthen accountable local self-government.