

1. **poser** (noun) – puzzle, mystery, conundrum; difficult/perplexing problem/question.
2. **reputation** (noun) – character, status, position.
3. **even-handedness** (noun) – unbiased & fair decision, straightforwardness, fairness.
4. **humongous** (adjective) – huge, enormous, substantial/massive.
5. **demanding** (adjective) – formidable, difficult, challenging.
6. **leniency** (noun) – clemency, forgiveness, mercifulness.
7. **promptly** (adverb) – quickly, swiftly, rapidly.
8. **obvious** (adjective) – clear, evident, apparent/manifest.
9. **abrasive** (adjective) – harsh, biting, tough/unfeeling.
10. **stoke** (verb) – incite, encourage, fuel.
11. **credit** (noun) – praise, commendation, merit/acclaim.
12. **implicitly** (adverb) – completely, absolutely, tacitly.
13. **underscore** (verb) – emphasize, highlight, underline.
14. **stand for** (phrasal verb) – advocate, champion, uphold/support (an idea).
15. **dispose of** (verb) – get rid of, discard/abandon, throw away.
16. **model code of conduct** (noun) – a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections.
17. **disconcerting** (adjective) – discomfiting, unsettling, disturbing.
18. **directive** (noun) – instruction, direction, regulation.
19. **propaganda** (noun) – promotion, advertisement, publicity/advocacy.
20. **unanimous** (adjective) – in complete agreement/accord, with one voice, concordant/united.
21. **dissent** (noun) – disagreement, disapproval, opposition.
22. **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
23. **credibility** (noun) – trustworthiness, reliability, integrity.
24. **deem** (verb) – regard as, consider; think/judge.
25. **innocent** (adjective) – not guilty, blameless, faultless/beyond criticism.
26. **clean chit** (noun) – In India, the expression is used to mean ‘cleared of any wrongdoing’. Native speakers of English prefer to use ‘**clean sheet**’, instead.
27. **astounding** (adjective) – shocking, surprising, bewildering.
28. **martyr** (noun) – a person who was killed/put to death on account of his/her’s beliefs.
29. **technicality** (noun) – details, niceties/finer points, particulars.
30. **absolve** (verb) – vindicate, discharge, clear.
31. **prohibition** (noun) – embargo, restriction, ban.
32. **apolitical** (adjective) – not interested/involved in politics.
33. **speculate** (verb) – guess, surmise, conjecture.
34. **well-founded** (adjective) – acceptable, genuine, credible.
35. **occasional** (adjective) – irregular, odd, infrequent.
36. **impartiality** (noun) – fairness; treating all people and groups equally.
37. **starkly** (adverb) – in a sharply clear way.

Posers on the code: on EC clearing PM Modi’s speeches

In clearing PM Modi's speeches, the EC risks its reputation for even-handedness

In an election that lasts seven weeks, it is not only the task of conducting the polls that is humongous; policing the conduct of political parties and candidates can be equally demanding. The Opposition has been complaining frequently about what it believes is the Election Commission's leniency towards the ruling BJP, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The focus is now on the manner in which the EC is dealing with complaints against Mr. Modi for some of his controversial campaign speeches. While complaints against other leaders were promptly dealt with, there was an obvious delay in taking up those against Mr. Modi. Few would have failed to notice that he has been running an abrasive campaign. He has stoked fears over India's security, claimed credit for the performance of the armed forces and implicitly underscored that his party stands for the religious majority. It was only after the matter reached the Supreme Court that the three-member EC began to dispose of the complaints. It has found nothing wrong in most of the remarks about which complaints were made for possible violation of the Model Code of Conduct. What is disconcerting is the EC's finding that none of his remarks touching on the role of the armed forces under his rule violates the directive against the use of the armed forces for political propaganda. That some of these decisions were not unanimous, but marked by dissent from one of the Election Commissioners, points to the seriousness of the credibility crisis the institution is facing.

For instance, a remark Mr. Modi made in Wardha on April 1 — that Congress president Rahul Gandhi was contesting from a constituency "where the majority community is in a minority" — was deemed innocent, and it took four weeks for the EC to give this clean chit. The second one, for a speech at Latur on April 9, was even more astounding. There, the Prime Minister made a direct appeal to first-time voters that they should dedicate their votes to the Air Force team that struck at Balakot, and the martyrs of Pulwama. The technicality the EC used to absolve Mr. Modi was that he did not directly appeal for votes in the name of the armed forces. So far the EC has rejected six complaints. The prohibition against the use of the armed forces in **election** propaganda is to underscore their apolitical nature and to deny ruling parties the opportunity to project their performance as their own achievements. Yet, the EC has decided that none of the references to air strikes, the nuclear option and dealing with Pakistan attracted the bar under the MCC. It is difficult not to speculate that had the same remarks been made by other candidates, they may have attracted a ban on campaigning for a period. The EC has so far retained its well-founded reputation, although there have been occasional complaints in the past that questioned its impartiality. It is unfortunate that this reputation for independence and even-handedness is starkly under question in this election.