What is an Election Security Deposit?

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About election security deposit:

- An **election security deposit** is an amount that is to be deposited with the **Returning Officer when a candidate files their nomination.**
- This is to be submitted either in cash, or a receipt must be enclosed with the nomination paper, showing that the said sum has been deposited on the **candidate's behalf in the Reserve Bank of India or in a Government Treasury.**
- The main purpose of this practice is to ensure that only genuinely intending candidates end up filing the nomination to be a part of the electoral process.
- The amount depends on the particular election being conducted, and the **Representation of the People Act of 1951** mentions different amounts depending on the level of election:

    - in the case of an election from a Parliamentary constituency, meaning a Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha seat, the amount is Rs 25,000 and Rs 12,500 for a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidate.
    - in the case of an election from an Assembly or Council constituency, meaning at the level of legislative bodies in the states, it is Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,000 for an SC/ST candidate.
    - even in the case of Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections, a deposit of Rs 15,000 is to be made.

When is a candidate said to 'lose' their security deposit?

- As per the same Act, the deposit has to be forfeited at an election if the number of valid votes polled by the candidate is less than 1/6th of the total number of valid votes polled.
- Or, in the case of the election of more than one member, it would be **1/6th of the total number of valid votes so polled divided by the number of members to be elected.**
- This refers to elections by proportional representation method, as is the case in Rajya Sabha.
- If the candidate does meet the threshold, "the deposit shall be returned as soon as practicable after the result of the election is declared".
- If a candidate withdraws their nomination or passes away before the polls, the amount is returned.

Q1) What is proportional representation?

Proportional representation refers to an electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds closely with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party. This is a more complicated but representative system than the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system used in India.

Source: Indian Express