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Title: Need to amend the Representation of Peoples Act.

PROF. SAUGATA ROY (DUM DUM): Apprehending increased use of money power and paid news in the forthcoming state elections, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has requested the Centre to take urgent measures, including considering an ordinance, to designate the malpractices as specific crimes. The Election Commission has recommended the Centre to make distribution of money among voters by candidates, their agents and supporters a cognizable offence under the Criminal Procedure Code so that offenders could be arrested without bail. He suggested hiking the jail term for filing a false affidavit from six months to two years which would bar a candidate from contesting for six years. The CEC said the bribery had assumed similar proportions and needed to be dealt with an iron hand. Election Commission is undertaking a clause by clause review of the Representation of the People Act. The CEC also said that the paid news was another problem. At present we determine which news item is paid news and add the expenses incurred to the candidates' expenses, which is Rs. 75 lakh for Lok Sabha elections and Rs. 28 lakh for Assembly elections. But with most candidates reporting poll expenses that are only 50% of the limit, we need to deal with the problem by making it an offence under the RP Act.