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Press Release

Common Cause welcomes dismissal of SBI’s Plea for extension in Electoral Bonds Judgment

Common Cause welcomes today’s judgement of the Constitution Bench in the contempt petition filed jointly by ADR and Common Cause. As co-petitioners in the Electoral Bonds petition in 2017, challenging the constitutionality of Electoral Bonds, and again in the contempt petition filed last week, Common Cause is happy and relieved! We believe it is a major victory for democracy in India!

In a way, the Constitution Bench has called the bluff of SBI’s legal team which was using deception and diversionary tactics to stall a historic judgment. Today, the Court noted that the requisite information is sufficiently available with SBI and directed it to disclose it by the close of business hours of March 12, 2024. The bench further directed the ECI to compile the information and publish the details in its official website by 15 March, 2024 by 5 PM.

Earlier, hearing a joint petition by ADR and Common Cause, the Supreme Court struck down the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 holding it as violative of the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Common Cause and ADR had jointly challenged the constitutionality of the Electoral Bonds in a PIL in 2017 while other petitioners (CPIM and Jaya Thakur of Congress) had joined in later, in 2018 and 2022 respectively. The petitioners had made several submissions subsequently to draw the attention of the Apex Court to the dangers such a scheme posed to the autonomy of India and its free and fair elections.

“Our judgment was issued on February 15. Today, it is March 11. In the last 26 days, what is the extent of matching done by you? The affidavit is silent on this. We expect a degree of candour from the State Bank of India,” the CJI said. The court’s observation has exposed the hubris and defiance of SBI that seemed to be in hurry to comply with the Apex Court’s order. The SBI had sought extension till June 30, which was rightly dismissed by the Court today.

Common Cause works for probity in public life and Governance reforms since 1980. It also brings out the Status of Policing in India Reports (SPIR) for citizen-centric policing.

Common Cause believes that today’s judgment upholds the citizen’s ‘right to know’ as to who is funding a political party. Common Cause is committed to continuing its democratic fight for free and fair elections in India.