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## Day after, BJP takes the lead in collecting funds online

BJP members asked to open accounts in state-run banks, hold training sessions with state treasurers

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NEW DELHI

**A** day after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) announced that political parties could collect funds online, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was quick off the blocks.

The party has already made preparations to receive online payments and is encouraging supporters to opt for online donations.

Senior leaders of the party, especially ministers in the central government, have told party members that they should take steps to ensure that funds are collected online. They said the BJP should lead the way to convey to other political parties that online collections of funds is a more transparent way of political funding.

"The decision of the government has been conveyed to the BJP leadership that they should focus on collecting smaller

denomination of money through online means with the hope of increasing collection. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has focussed on making political funding transparent and the BJP should lead the way," said a senior minister who asked not to be named.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday announced several reforms in political funding, including capping down anonymous donations from Rs20,000 to Rs2,000 and allowing donations in the form of digital payments.

PM Modi has often highlighted the need for transparency in political funding. Coupled with the government's push for a digital economy, the BJP wants to showcase itself as an early participant in the reforms.

The party has asked all its state units to open bank accounts in public sector banks to ensure smooth online donations.

"BJP is very well prepared to receive online payments. We are asking district and state level to open bank accounts with one public sector bank (PSB) only so that funds can be transferred online (relatively easily)," said Gopal



The BJP is in the process of integrating payments via e-wallets, QR codes and BHIM app, says spokesperson Krishna Agarwal.

Krishna Agarwal, spokesperson of the party on economic affairs.

Agarwal said the party holds training sessions with state treasurers on a regular basis to keep a proper record of donations and expenditure which are then shared with the party head office.

BJP leaders also pointed out that while the party website is ready to take payments and donations through online and mobile

applications, the technique was first used during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections when the party raised campaign funds online.

"Our website is geared to take online donations and even our official mouthpiece *Kamal Sandesh* is now receiving payments by cheque and online," Agarwal added.

BJP members further said the party's IT cell has been instructed

to work on online payments. "All property documents and office records are being updated and centralized. We are in process of integrating wallet-to-wallet payments and QR code and BHIM app," Agarwal added.

Senior leaders of the party argued that the all the bank accounts of BJP are audited regularly by chartered accountants which help in keeping IT returns and donation records up to date. "Auditors are appointed at the state level also," Agarwal added.

He said that the BJP had undertaken a campaign to enrol members online—the drive ended in 2015 after membership grew to more than 11 crore. "The verification and validation of this data is being continuously done at district and state level; this will help in online donations," said Agarwal.

Political analysts said online collection of funds is a first step but more stringent steps need to be taken. "Online collection of funds is a good first step but more needs to be done to clean the process of political funding," said Jai Mrug, a Mumbai-based political analyst.



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