

**For Immediate release**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2011**

## **Summary**

- **ECI announces new guidelines to curb money power in elections**
- **CEC launches webpage providing details of Income Tax Returns of Political Parties**
- **A book released on Bihar Election Watch by Dr Quraishi and Mr Gopalakrishnan Gandhi**
- **Mr Gopalakrishnan calls for urgent passage of the Lok Pal bill to cleanse corruption in politics**
- **ECI to announce a list of Expenditure Sensitive Constituency**
- **Representatives of all political parties to discuss Political Party reforms tomorrow**

**Chennai, Feb 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011:** Attending the 7<sup>th</sup> national conference on electoral and political reforms, Dr Quraishi said that Election Commission of India is gearing up to implement the new guidelines for the upcoming Tamil Nadu election, which were followed in Bihar election to curb money and liquor power.

“After the success of the Bihar election, carried out as per new guidelines, in curbing money and liquor influence, we are going to replicate the same guidelines for upcoming assembly election in Tamil Nadu and other four state going for election,” said S Y Quraishi, Chief Election Commissioner of India.

Talking about political parties he said that political parties are the lifeline of the electoral democratic process. “It is dangerous therefore to malign and dismiss all of them.” Bureaucracy has always been under the scanner for being a party to corrupt practices but it could only be changed when the political pressure on bureaucracy is removed.

Further highlighting the issues of de-criminalization of politics, he said that the Election Commission had proposed the idea of restraining criminals from contesting elections however majority of the political parties refused to accept it saying it could become a medium to block opponent candidate by filing baseless complaints.

Meanwhile, the EC is trying to find a mid-way by proposing to overlook petty crimes while candidates with serious criminal cases like murder, rape and others attracting imprisonment of more than five years would be restrained from contesting.

Talking about transparency in party funding, Dr. Quraishi quoted Union Law Minister’s word which said that elections in India are the biggest source of corruption.

EC is following new guidelines to curb the money power and bring transparency in the election process. Black money is a prime cause of criminalization of politics.

Though there is a ban on campaign by political parties 48 hours before the election, the print media has been left out. Even print media should be brought under the fold so that voters are not influenced on the day of voting by seeing the advertisement on papers.

He pointed out that politics is involved in transferring key government officials just six months before the election. “Any transfer six months prior to election must be done after consulting the Election Commission,” he added. He insisted that extra efforts should be taken to ensure more and more urban voter come out for voting.

The CEC also mentioned the ongoing consultations on electoral reforms being organized by the Law Ministry and the ECI as a step forward to formulate a bill on electoral reforms.

After the address he launched a webpage on the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) website which provides information pertaining to income tax returns filed by all major political parties. (IT returns also contain details of all contributions above 20,000 received by the respective parties)

In consideration of the wide variation in the voting pattern in the various constituencies of the state, State Election Commission has commissioned a study to understand voter’s behavior and find out reason for the low voter turnout in some constituencies.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) **K Praveen Kumar** said that the study have found long queue as the major reason for low voter turnout in urban areas. The study has been outsourced to a private organization which is expected to submit the final report in mid-next month, he added. It has been conducted in 20 constituencies with lowest voter turnout and 20 constituencies with highest voter turnout across the state.

**Gopalakrishna Gandhi, Former Governor of West Bengal** in his speech urged NGOs to maintain the highest honesty and they should not accept foreign donations. NGOs should reward and award the candidates, whether they win or lose, for their electoral conduct, he added.

Measures proposed by ECI for upcoming elections in five states:

#### Preventive Measures

- Press advertisement for educating on Legal provisions
- Meeting with NGOs and NYK, Citizen forum
- Appeal through media to public

- Appeal to Political Parties and candidates for self restraint
- Robust Mechanism in place
- Identification of Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies ( ESC)
- Associating Income Tax Investigation Directorate for keeping vigil over movement of illicit cash during election process
- Opening of separate bank account for election expense and asking candidates to incur all expenses through cheque
- Advising Political Parties to avoid cash transactions during election process
- A toll free number to work 24 x 7 at District Level to receive all complaints
- The reports on the Expenditure related Complaints will be submitted to Expenditure Observer/ Micro observers and those related to MCC violation to RO/General Observer.

All calls made to the call center shall be recorded for future verification

- Flying Squads for each police station with one executive magistrate and 3 - 4 Police Officials and one police officer to take action against complaints
- Static Surveillance teams to put check posts in major roads
- This will be supervised by the S Ps and Daily Activity Report sent to Observer
- I.G. Level Police Officer from other states to supervise the surveillance activities of Police
  - Expenditure Observers for each district
  - Assistant Expenditure Observer for each constituency
  - More number of Observers and Assistant Observers in ESC
  - More number of Flying Squads and Static Surveillance teams with man power from central Govt. and central PSUs and CPF
- To take video shots of Major Election Expenditure including public rally, processions size of tents, furniture, dais, rostrums, barricades, posters, hoardings, arches, illuminations and Cut-outs etc.

- Under supervision of Expenditure Observer
- To submit Video Cue sheet and video clippings on the same day to the Video viewing team.
- To view each video taken by the Video Surveillance Team and prepare Report of Expenditure incurred by each candidate and to submit report of estimated expenditure along with folder of evidence and Cue sheet to the Accounting Team within 24 hrs

To submit report regarding MCC violation to RO/General Observer

- For each district, a team headed by Deputy DEO and District PRO & Staff and one nominee of Press Council of India to monitor print and electronic media and Paid News.
- In Paid News, the candidate to be issued notice for not accounting the expenses and PCI informed about the Print media involved
- To submit daily report to the Accounting Team with respect to media advertisement expenditure by the Candidate.
- It will report to DEO and General Observer regarding any MCC violation
  - Daily Production, Distribution and Off take of liquor in the state is to be monitored and close watch over inter state border
  - The bookings of marriage halls and Mandaps to be monitored
  - Distribution of gift items and cash coupons to be closely monitored
  - Unusual cash deposit/ withdrawal in account of SHGs and NGOs
  - Checking distribution of cash by Political party at the time of disbursal of wages under Government scheme

The discussion on Electoral Integrity gave a major kick start to the National Conference on Electoral and Political Reforms here in IIT Chennai. The Conference is expected to get more heated tomorrow with the Panel Discussion on 'Political Party Reform' bringing together representatives from all major parties including Mr. Maitreyan from AIADMK, Mr. D. Raja from CPI, Mr. Gnana Desikan from INC, Mr. Madhav Kutti from CPI (M), Anubumani Ramadas (PMK), Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman from BJP, Mr. T.K.S. Elangovan from DMK, Mr. D. Raja from CPI etc.

The session would also include presentation on accounts format prepared for the political parties by from Institute of Chartered Accounts and India; S B Zaware.

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