

Statement by Dr. S. Y. Quraishi

Chief Election Commissioner

30<sup>th</sup> July 2010

I take over this office with a sense of deep honour and pride. Election Commission is one of the most valuable gifts of the Indian Constitution to the people. I had the opportunity of serving this august institution with equal pride as Election Commissioner for the last four years. While the framers of the Constitution insulated the Election Commission from all possible pressures, it is the judiciary that has zealously guarded the independence of the Commission against any assault. The Supreme Court has ensured that this Commission only grows stronger.

In our multi-member Commission that has the principle of equality as its hallmark, any transition is marked by continuity. This has also contributed to the impartiality and absolute neutrality of the Commission at all times.

In great institutions, priorities do not change overnight; they do not change radically either. Our basics are perennial. We would continuously strive to deliver free and fair election wherever and whenever required. At the same time, despite the strength of the Commission's heritage, our systems are continuously evolving. We not only deal with issues as we confront them, we try to anticipate several of them.

Enhancing Voters Participation and restricting the role of money power in elections are among the emerging challenges. These will receive due priority. We are already working systematically to achieve a perfect electoral roll at the earliest.

We plan to institutionalize electoral training and exchange of experience at an international scale and quality. This would be backed by documentation of innovative electoral practices in order to strengthen election management not only in India but also across the world.

I am encouraged by the fact that some of the overdue electoral reforms have started receiving attention of the Government and Parliament. I have hope that other important reforms would find acceptance at an early date.

Elections in India are known not only for their scale, but also for their credibility. I realise the responsibility that the Election Commission carries towards keeping India's democracy firmly on the rails. I have abiding faith that the Commission will continue to deliver on its mandate, in the face of all challenges old and new, as it has always done in the past. Election Commission of India is an institution in which the nation places a great trust. It would be my utmost endeavour to prove myself worthy of this trust. Let me use this occasion to seek the support of all stakeholders, especially the people of India in the discharge of my sacred duties.

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