

No. 61/PB-LA/2012

Dated: January 3, 2012

Respected Chief Minister

We have seen with deep dismay media reports quoting a statement emanating from you that questions actions of the Commission's officials during the election period. The reports mention that you have solicited my intervention so that our officials 'act with constitutional restraint'. I am particularly disappointed that you have chosen to communicate with me and the Commission through the media rather than directly for which several channels are always available.

Let me assure you that the Commission operates within diligent awareness of its constitutional mandate and recognizes with the greatest respect the operational boundaries between various Constitutional bodies. If there have been any deviations in our work, we would be grateful if you bring specific cases to our notice.

Both the Commission and I personally value your standing as a political leader and statesman besides fully respecting your high office. Hence the Commission is concerned that you have made general allegations of interference against its officials and questioned their conduct without any basis. This could dent their morale and bring them under undue pressure with respect to ensuring free and fair polls, which you will appreciate, is the bedrock of governance, development and betterment of people, all of which you are very rightly concerned about.

As you know, the maintenance of law and order during election times is a basic pre-condition for free and fair polls and as such Commission can only have a vested interest in ensuring the same rather than ignoring it. I need to assure you that the same is being done in right earnest. Even the Supreme Court has observed that the commission's perceptions about law and order during elections should be respected. Similarly, on the enforcement of measures against black money in elections, the Commission's action is backed by a national consensus and also by the concerns expressed by all political parties. At the same time, Election Commission of India has due regard for citizens' convenience and that is why it keeps its own instructions under dynamic review. Upward revising of cash carrying limit from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2.5 lakh was one such instance. It would be unwise to see this as a weakness, as this indeed is the action of a responsive Commission.

In view of the above, we would request you to kindly reconsider your stated position on the working of the Election Commission of India officials. You would agree that we must not do anything at this juncture that can undermine election management, the ongoing election process and overall electoral democracy in the state of Punjab as well as the whole country.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(S.Y. Quraishi)

Shri Prakash Singh Badal  
Chief Minister,  
Punjab.