

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

PRESS NOTE

No. ECI/PN/6/2012

Dated: 9th January, 2012

The Commission has issued order for suitably covering the statues of elephants and statues of Ms Mayawati constructed in public places at government expenses. The order can be seen on the Commission's website <http://eci.nic.in>. This has been done in connection with the conduct of General Election to the State Assembly of Uttar Pradesh.

The Commission has come across a range of comments on and interpretation of this particular order. Some of these observations are not based on substance and some are misleading. Some of the comments suggest a lack of understanding of the facts.

The Model Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates envisages providing a level playing field for all political parties and candidates at an election. There are standing instructions of the Commission that images and photographs of the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, Ministers and other political functionaries who are active in public life should not be displayed in government buildings and premises as that would have the effect of disturbing the level playing field vis-s vis the functionaries of other political parties and candidates. The Commission has clarified in 2009 that these instructions do not apply to the images of national leaders, poets and prominent historical figures of the past.

Statues of elephant which is the reserved election symbol of the Bahujan Samaj Party and statues of Ms Mayawati who is the president of the party, constructed in public places at government expenses get covered in the instructions mentioned above and their continued display at public places during the election period would be violative of the spirit of the Model Code and would be against the principles of level playing field for all parties and candidates. The Commission has taken similar steps in the past also.

The issue of statues was the subject matter of some complaints before the Commission in 2009, and in its order of 11th October, 2010, the Commission had made it clear that at the time of elections, the Commission would take appropriate steps to see that the statues do not disturb the level playing field.

(Yashvir Singh)

Director