

Sept. 18, 2007

Press Release

ECP Criticized for Lack of Transparency

Lahore/Islamabad: Consumer Watch Pakistan (CWP) expresses its serious concerns about the non-transparent functioning of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP); and demands that it must immediately improve its style of working and decision-making in accordance with the widely recognized principles of transparency and good governance. The ECP must realize that it is a constitutional body with an extremely important mandate and, therefore, it should not continue working like any other department or ministry of the government. It must reject the culture of secrecy, become more open in its functioning, organize itself on corporate lines, hold regular consultations with stakeholders and adopt completely transparent procedures in its decision making.

One recent example of lack of transparency on the part of the ECP is the way it has amended the rules that govern the presidential elections. If such an amendment was at all needed, the ECP must have followed a transparent procedure, which would have helped the ECP in building its credibility. It is highly regrettable that the ECP chose to go about it in a secretive manner, which has made it controversial and created the impression of its collusion with certain presidential candidates.

It is not known today when the proposal for changing the rules for the presidential election was made, who initiated it, why it was felt important just before the schedule for the presidential election was to be announced, whether the Chief Election Commission (CEC) gave his approval, who were consulted for expert legal advice in the process, and why the whole process was kept secret. It is strange that the amendment was not made public by the ECP but by a federal minister. However, this is not the only instance of non-transparent functioning and decision-making on the part of ECP.

The ECP has not been transparent in the context of electoral rolls as well. For instance, it has not been able to fully share the details of the methodology that is being followed to implement the Supreme Court order aimed at ensuring registration of all missing voters in the draft 2007 lists. Concerns have particularly been expressed about the verification process in relation to the missing voters as identified through the comparison of 2002 voters' lists with the draft 2007 rolls. The ECP has failed to explain what the verification process is; and how the same

would be implemented on the ground. The continuing silence in this context on the part of ECP has created the impression that voters included in the 2002 lists but not on the draft 2007 rolls would be simply included in the new rolls without any verification. If true, this would be a matter of serious concern, as the 2002 rolls are widely known for including a large number of bogus or invalid entries. In fact, the very reason for creating new rolls was that the 2002 rolls were problematic.

It is extremely important that, while implementing the Supreme Court order, the ECP follows a foolproof and a credible procedure to eliminate the possibility of bogus, double or fraudulent entries. It would be challenging task in a situation when the condition of CNIC has been set aside; which also underlines the importance of maximum transparency and regular consultations with stakeholders.

Yours' sincerely,

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