

Cancerous cynicism

9-6/2003 (48) 9.5.8 27/12
The CEC may have a point about politicians
but he should offer remedies, not barbs

THERE are those who rush to see parallels between T.N. Seshan, the former chief election commissioner, and the present incumbent, J.M. Lyngdoh. Seshan, it may be recalled, used to observe that politics, like patriotism, is the last refuge of the scoundrel and he would often boast that he had "politicians for breakfast". All these soundbites and barks won for the man the title of 'Al-Seshan'. But while Seshan was voluble and used his words like a broadsword, Lyngdoh's style more recalls the whiplash — a quick slash that bears a sting in its tail.

Wordsmiths are still trying to decode what precisely he had meant when he once famously dismissed some criticism of him as the "gossip of menials". Then there was that famous moment when he was caught roundly upbraiding a Gujarat official as a "joker", which television microphones picked up with glee and splashed all over primetime. Therefore, the rather intemperate edge to his latest observations about Indian politicians in a television interview should cause no surprise, it is but

part of a rich verbal legacy that is distinctly his own. In Lyngdoh's case, clearly, the familiarity with the tribe of politicians that his job has fostered has only bred the greatest contempt.

It's a pity though that the man who is ultimately responsible for delivering democracy should have such an abiding contempt for the footsoldiers of that democracy. Of course, politicians are all that Lyngdoh says they are. They can be both arrogant and servile at the same time, they may not know how to talk and observe social niceties. They also often don't have the least regard for individual freedoms, apart from their own, of course. However, when he says that there is not one politician who is committed to democracy, he betrays a lack of discernment and an overload of prejudice that sits ill on a chief election commissioner. Lyngdoh insists that politicians cause cancer. Actually, it is cynicism that causes cancer of the system. It would be far more useful for those who head constitutional institutions to offer solutions to endemic problems, rather than mere barbs.

9. Brach
(CPC)

Political parties unhappy with Lyngdoh statement

HD-13
27/12

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 26. Neither political parties nor politicians had any reason to be happy with the statement made by the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, describing them as a "cancer" for which there was no cure, in the course of an interview with a news agency published today.

The general view, even if expressed cautiously, was that he had crossed the 'Lakshman Rekha' and should have exercised restraint, instead of condemning all political parties and practically every politician as undemocratic by instinct or a crook by nature.

The Bharatiya Janata Party president, Venkaiah Naidu, said bluntly: "The credibility and sanctity of the Chief Election Commissioner's office has been reduced... it is a loss to democracy. To condemn all politicians and call them cheats or describe them as cancer was not at all appropriate." He said that while "it was the job of the Election Commission to conduct free and fair elections, it was for the people to decide who they want to elect."

The Congress was more circumspect. The party spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy, at first refused to comment, saying there was "no need for a national party to react to or comment on the remarks of the Chief Election Commissioner." However, when pressed by reporters, Mr. Reddy said "such sweeping statements against politicians can only weaken the system."

Karan Singh, MP, described Mr. Lyngdoh's comments as "characteristically unbalanced." While it may be true that there was a great deal of corruption and nepotism in political life, there were a number of men and women in politics who were not there to make money. "Tarring all politicians with the same brush" was not the right

thing to do. Such statements could only harm the system by bringing into further disrepute the already discredited political class. The need was to stem the rot and the recent changes in the law on defections and the move to limit the size of ministries was a step in that direction. "Let it be remembered that without politicians and political parties the whole system of constitutional governance would collapse," Mr. Singh said.

'Lyngdoh must remain within his limits'

Our Bangalore Special Correspondent writes: The Union Agriculture Minister, Rajnath Singh, has taken exception to the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, likening politicians to cancer, stating that being a Constitutional authority, he should remain within his limits.

Speaking to presspersons here today, Mr. Singh said he was speaking in his individual capacity. He was deeply hurt by the remarks and being a former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and now a Union Minister, he could assert that none could raise a finger at him. Could Mr. Lyngdoh say that all those connected with the Election Commission were honest and dedicated to values? Mr. Lyngdoh could not reform anyone through abuse.

Asked about the involvement of politicians in scams, Mr. Singh said even bureaucrats were involved in some. Mr. Singh asserted that the National Democratic Alliance Government had set a clean record by not interfering in the affairs of any authority — the Election Commission or even the Central Bureau of Investigation. The credit for this should go to the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, who treated such institutions with respect.

Lyngdoh says politicians are cancerous

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 DECEMBER



CHIEF Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh is at it again. The CEC, who has repeatedly raised the heckles of the political class by his controversial remarks, this time likened politicians to a "cancer for which there is no cure at the moment."

The description, quite harsh even by Mr Lyngdoh's unorthodox standards, came in an interview Mr Lyngdoh gave to the BBC and is set to trigger a fresh controversy. Mr Lyngdoh did not back off from the controversial remark even after he was offered a chance to do so by the interviewer.

In the BBC interview, Mr Lyngdoh reiterated his earlier observations that one was bound to get cancer if exposed to politicians for too long and remarked that "we haven't found any cure for cancer yet, so in due course if cancer is cured, we'll have to find some other expression (to describe politicians)."

He also said there was no politician in the country who was committed to democracy and the welfare of the people. "Democracy means basically individual freedom and that you respect individual freedom to the utmost extent... I can't think of anybody who is that involved in individual freedom," he commented, continuing his bleak outline of politicians.

Explaining why he did not rate politicians highly, the CEC, who is to demit office in less than two months, explained that "either they have their noses stuck in the air or they are prostrate at somebody's feet... there's nothing in between... there are very few politicians who are in-between and speak to you at the same level, I mean as just good human beings."

The Economic Times 26 DEC 2003

Politicians are a cancer with no cure: Lyngdoh

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, December 25

THE TOUGH and plain-speaking Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh has once again attacked politicians, calling them a "cancer" for which there was "no cure at the moment".

Lyngdoh said there was no politician in the country committed to democracy and welfare of the people. He declared he would refuse any post-retirement job, even if offered.

The CEC, who is to demit office in less than two months, said his parting message was

to build pressure to incorporate free and fair elections as part of the fundamental rights of the Constitution.

In an interview to Karan Thapar on the *Hard Talk India* programme in BBC World, he reiterated that if people were "exposed" to too much of politicians they might get "cancer". In fact the politicians themselves were the cancer, he said.

When told it was a stinging indictment of Indian democracy, Lyngdoh said it was because democracy meant a whole lot of other things.

"It's not merely going

through the motions of an election. Democracy means basically individual freedom and that you respect individual freedom to the uttermost extent. I can't think of anybody around now."

Asked whether he meant that people who really were not fit to rule were ruling the country, he replied in the affirmative.

To a question on the "pernicious influence" of politicians, Lyngdoh compared them to zamindars. A five-year term by many governments of the day was looked upon as a five-year lease of the zamindari and

therefore they could do whatever they wanted in those five years.

"Basically it is exploiting the potential, the resources of a particular state. That's how many of them look upon it. There are exceptions, but by and large this is so in the present circumstances."

The CEC said there were "very few" politicians who knew to talk politely and understood basic courtesies.

"There are very few who talk to you on equal terms as a human being. Either they have their noses stuck in the air or they prostrate at somebody's

feet. There is nothing in between."

Asked about the term "cheating" he used against politicians which was contemptuous and dismissive of them, Lyngdoh said it was his duty to do that because no one else was going to do it.

"It might seem strange but somebody has to do that. I think everyone is flattering them all the time and they only get worse. Somebody has to tell them they're not so lovely as they think they are."

The CEC also sought to correct the impression that India was a "marvellous democracy"

saying it was "all self-flattery, self-blandishment".

"We are all gloating over this when we ought not to and it was about time somebody spoke the truth," he added.

On the perception that under him the election commission was operating in confrontation with governments rather in co-ordination, he said it was "absolutely inevitable and you can't get away from it".

Lyngdoh said that as an institution the Commission had always had a power struggle with the political executive to carry out proper elections.

Error of Commission

5/8 1/12 J. Steeb (LSC)
EC ignores voters' right to know

The Election Commission had emerged as a sort of a hero when the political class sought to sabotage the Supreme Court-directed change in poll law, requiring candidates file detailed affidavits on their education, assets and criminal record. If only politicians knew that the EC's work ethic does match its reformist rhetoric, they would not have bothered. With less than a week to go for the assembly elections, the commission's website not only does not have the full list of candidate information, such minimal efforts as were put in till Thursday night showed evidence of hasty and shoddy work — the scanned affidavits were tough to read on the computer screen and print outs would have challenged the most sharp-eyed observer of democracy.

This is, to say the least, a dreadful dereliction of duty on the EC's part. No excuse is good enough because the commission had enough notice, has enough resources and, given that the 1 December elections represent the first real test of the new poll law, had an extra special obligation. What would James Michael Lyngdoh have told another government agency if it had been so far off the target so near the election date? "Jokers", perhaps, as the Chief Election Commissioner famously described Gujarat administration officials. Being less linguistically adventurous, we would only say that the EC's effort has been a joke. And further that it is no good saying voters can obtain the information from local administration. That goes against the spirit and the substance of the change in electoral practice.

If information dissemination leading to more informed voter choice is the issue, the internet can scarcely be ignored. What is a better option? A visit to a district magistrate's office to look at dusty affidavits or checking them out on the EC's website? What of those citizens who are out-of-state but can vote, like soldiers, who, for the first time these elections, have the right to proxy voting? An Indian Army soldier from, say, Delhi and posted in Kargil may have wanted to know who his candidates are? Does he have to take home leave for this? The EC may well finish the job of putting up all the information on its site just before the 1 December deadline. But cutting it so fine more or less defeats the purpose. Indeed politicians can turn around and say that they have been treated unfairly in so far as "truthful" information provided by them was not made available to voters in the best possible way.

All this is not to suggest that the EC has not in recent years done a fine job of supervising elections in the world's largest and one of its most rambunctious democracies. But those very achievements make this failing all the more glaring. The next time Lyngdoh rebukes the political class, a clever politician will have at least one effective riposte.

THE STATESMAN 1 DEC 2003

EC notice to BJP on code violation

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 30. — The Election Commission today issued show-cause notices to the BJP president, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, and the party candidate from Gole Market, Mrs Poonam Azad, for violating the model code of conduct.

The full EC met late this evening and issued the notices after finding that Union tourism minister Mr Jagmohan and MP Mr Kirti Azad distributed official publications in favour of Mrs Azad who is contesting against Delhi chief minister Mrs Sheila Dikshit.

Acting on complaints received from various sources, the EC asked the candidate and the BJP to respond within three days as to why action may not be taken against the party for violating the model code of conduct enforced for ensuring fair and free elections.

"We are examining the EC notices and after that we will reply accordingly," BJP spokesman Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said.

The EC, following an inquiry, found that the official publications of the tourism ministry, *Regenerated India New Dimensions*; *Kurukshetra* and *Red Fort Delhi-Rebirth of a Fort* contained in a fancy bag with the inscription "Incredible



Para-military personnel guard a booth on the eve of Assembly polls in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

India", along with appeals for votes by Mr Jagmohan and Mr Azad, were being distributed to voters in the constituency.

"The EC is of the opinion that the aforesaid official publication of the ministry of tourism, government of India, have

been misappropriated and distributed to electors by Mr Jagmohan and Mr Azad, in favour of Mrs Azad to promote her prospects in the aforesaid election, at government cost, in violation of the model code of conduct," the show-cause notice sent to the BJP chief stated.

The EC has asked Mrs Azad to clarify whether the material had been printed and distributed to voters under her authority and if so whether the expenditure in respect thereof has been accounted for in her account of election expenses. It also asked her to furnish the complete details within 24 hours. In the notice to the BJP chief the EC said, "If the party failed to respond to the notice within three days, it will be assumed the party has nothing to say in the matter and the EC will take appropriate action or decision without further reference to the party."

'Mischief by rivals': Mr Jagmohan today said no official agency circulated ITDC bags in Gole Market constituency in Delhi and termed it as "mischief" by political rivals, adds PTI. "Anybody can have these bags, free of cost," he said. He said he had issued an appeal only as an MP in favour of Mrs Azad but not authorised anybody to distribute bags along with the appeal.

Editorial: Error of Commission, page 8
Poll reports, page 5

Too Pure to be Sure

J M Lyngdoh ticks off politicians
for electoral misuse

It would be difficult to accuse Chief Election Commissioner J M Lyngdoh of favouring one or another political party as he zealously goes about the task of conducting elections. Forget that, it wouldn't even be possible to make an educated guess as to where our man's political sympathies might lie, or if he would vote at all when the time came for him to exercise this right as a citizen. When last year he lit into the Gujarat bureaucracy for allowing itself to be used as Narendra Modi's handmaiden, the BJP swiftly concluded James Michael was a member of Sonia Gandhi's inner circle. But then he went and pointed a steely finger at Congressman Digvijay Singh. Since then the CEC has taken on Ajit Jogi, Chandrababu Naidu, and now his alleged mentor, Sonia Gandhi. So should one say three cheers to Mr Lyngdoh? Perhaps, yes. On second thoughts, make that two and a half cheers. The CEC's impeccably impartial conduct is undoubtedly cause for celebration. The disturbing part is the Seshanesque obsession with the letter of the law. Take the way Mr Lyngdoh has flown off the handle over Sonia Gandhi's alleged use of state aircraft to conduct Mr Jogi's election.

If Mrs Gandhi is guilty of making unauthorised use of the plane, by all means punish her. Let the Congress pay a stiff penalty for it, and let it understand that the state cannot be treated as an extension of the party in office. But it seems a trifle excessive to threaten the Congress with de-recognition, as Mr Lyngdoh has done. If the logic of punishment in this case is that use of state craft militates against fair play, then, Mr Lyngdoh could be similarly charged for tilting the electoral scales against one party. Punishment must be commensurate with the crime or that in itself would be injustice. Agreed, Mr Lyngdoh's no-nonsense manner and his personal integrity have won him a vast fan club. But it is a thin line between an honest officer determined to enforce rules and an authoritarian figure using those rules to threaten and subdue. A classic example of the latter was T N Seshan, who, though beginning gloriously, had so overextended himself by the time his tenure ended that he was closer to looking like a whimsical potentate. Indian democracy needs rules as democracies everywhere, but to make it rule-bound is to take a puritanical view of a phenomenon that is meant to be free-spirited in every sense of the term.

ANDHRA PRADESH ASSEMBLY DISSOLVED

Naidu seeks Feb. polls; not possible, says CEC

By S. Nagesh Kumar

HYDERABAD, NOV. 14. The Andhra Pradesh Governor, Surjit Singh Barnala, today dissolved the 294-member State Legislative Assembly, 11 months ahead of the completion of its tenure, on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers which wants to seek a fresh mandate on the plank of fighting naxalite violence in the State.

However, Mr. Naidu's carefully laid-out plans of going in for early polls received a jolt when the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, declared in New Delhi that it would not be possible for the Commission to hold the elections in February and that the

commission "takes its own time" in carrying out such exercises.

The Chief Minister, who was informed of the CEC's stand at a press conference, said he would represent to Mr. Lyngdoh for February elections since March was a month of examinations.

Also, it was not proper for a caretaker Government to continue in office for too long. Mr. Naidu admitted that the Government had little to say in deciding the dates of elections since this was the job of the Election Commission.

Mr. Barnala requested the Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, and his Cabinet colleagues to continue as Caretaker Government, an offer that the

ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president readily accepted with the promise "to conduct themselves in a principled manner in keeping with the highest democratic traditions."

The Assembly dissolution, which comes 44 days after the near-fatal attack by the People's War on Mr. Naidu, on the Tirumala ghat road, has evoked a mixed reaction. The BJP, an ally of the TDP, described it as a courageous act and the Congress declared that it was ready for the battle while the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) questioned the logic behind the premature dissolution when the TDP enjoyed a clear majority in the Assembly.

Mr. Naidu earlier drove to the Raj Bhavan in the company of six senior Ministers carrying a Cabinet resolution seeking dissolution of the House "so that elections could be held and the will of the people against extremism clearly asserted." The Chief Minister was closeted with Mr. Barnala for about 10 minutes when he reportedly explained the rationale behind the Cabinet decision.

In his letter to Mr. Barnala seeking dissolution of the 11th Assembly, Mr. Naidu said his Government had been working for the all-round development of the State but extremism was posing a serious threat to progress. "It has become important, therefore, to go to the people and seek a clear mandate on the issue of extremist violence in the State. Unless extremism is countered in a clear and decisive manner, it would not be possible to develop Andhra Pradesh in keeping with the aspirations of the people."

Mr. Naidu told the Governor that the "opportunistic approach" of the Opposition in condoning extremist violence and urging talks with elements having no faith in democracy also needed to be exposed. Although his Government enjoyed the full confidence and support of the people of Andhra Pradesh, it was willing to sacrifice its remaining term in office to counter extremism through democratic means, he said.

Earlier, the State Cabinet, in a 55-minute-long meeting held at the Secretariat, adopted a two-page resolution, which fully echoed the feelings expressed at Thursday's general body meeting of the TDP.

BJP welcomes
TDP move: Page 11

We have 6 months time: Lyngdoh

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, NOV. 14. While stating that the Election Commission was not prepared to hold Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh in February, the Chief Election Commissioner, J. M. Lyngdoh, today maintained that the poll panel "takes its own time" in carrying out such exercises.

"It is not prepared at the moment," the CEC said while responding to a query on how well equipped the Commission was to conduct a snap Assembly election in Andhra Pradesh where the Telugu Desam Party Government today recommended the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly.

"The Election Commission takes its own time and holds elections whenever it is ready," Mr. Lyngdoh said. A six-month time was available to the Commission after the dissolution of the Assembly. The electoral rolls would have to be revised and it could be done the earliest by January-end.

Last year, the Supreme Court categorically held that "on the premature dissolution of an Assembly, the Election Commission is required to initiate immediate steps for holding elections for constituting the Assembly on the first occasion and, in any case, within six months from the date of premature dissolution of the Assembly."

The apex court thereby had rejected the contention of the Centre and the Gujarat Government that Article 174 (1) of the Constitution (which mandates that not more than six months should elapse between two sittings of an elected Assembly) would apply not only to a "live Assembly" but also to a "dissolved Assembly" and that the Election Commission was bound to hold elections within the six-month period.

A five-Judge Constitution Bench, giving its advisory opinion on the three-point Presidential reference arising out of the premature dissolution of the State Assembly by the Gujarat Government had held that Article 174 (1) would not apply to a "dissolved Assembly", "whose life has come to an end and ceased to exist. Further, Article 174 (1) neither relates to elections nor does it provide any outer limit for holding elections for constituting Legislative Assembly."

Thereby, the court had held that holding of elections "is in the exclusive domain of the Election Commission under Article 324 of the Constitution."

EC no to early AP polls

HF-1, 15/11/03 Election (CEC) (W) 9-87-AP (2)

Ashok Das/Rajnish Sharma
Hyderabad/New Delhi, Nov 14

THE ANDHRA Pradesh Assembly was dissolved on Friday. Soon after, Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh dampened the upbeat mood in the Telugu Desam, which was preparing to go into election mode, by announcing in New Delhi that neither Andhra Pradesh nor the Election Commission was prepared for polls.

Lyngdoh made it clear that the commission would hold elections in the state when it was ready to do so. The commission has six months from the dissolution of the House — till mid-May — to hold the elections.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's move to dissolve the House and hold early polls to cash in on the sympathy factor generated by the attempt on his life by Naxalites last month might not, therefore, work.

Election Commission sources said that the elections, in all likelihood, would not be held till mid-April, and perhaps even later. Electoral rolls have to be revised — an exercise that will last till January-end. One month will



J.M. Lyngdoh
Poll-pooper

then have to be given for objections to be recorded to the new rolls. Those have to be processed. Only then can the logistics of the electoral exercise be dealt with, which pushes the schedule back to mid-March. But it will be difficult to hold elections then, because school examinations are scheduled for that time.

Reacting to Lyngdoh's statement, Naidu said he wanted the elections to be held before March 2004, since it would not be proper for a caretaker government to be in place for a long time.

CPM inches closer to tie-up with Cong

Aloke Banerjee
Kolkata, November 14

The CPI(M) is gradually moving away from its earlier line of equidistance from both the Congress and the BJP. On the first day of the central committee meeting in Kolkata on Friday, most members identified the BJP as the main enemy and argued in favour of seat adjustments with the Congress in Andhra Pradesh.

The discussion will continue on Saturday, when politburo members give their opinions. Two members of the Andhra Pradesh committee and one politburo member in charge of Andhra insisted that it would be wrong to reject outright any understanding with the Congress.

CEC warns against violation of model code in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, NOV. 4. Placing poll-bound Chhattisgarh under the scanner, the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, today came down heavily on the "partisan" attitude of the State bureaucracy saying that even in Gujarat the officials had been more impartial.

At the end of a day-long visit by the three-member Election Commission, he warned the State Government that the model code of conduct should be strictly adhered to and that people at the highest level would be held responsible for lapses.

Asked at a press conference how confident he was about the Assembly elections in the State, Mr. Lyngdoh said, "I was more confident in Gujarat in spite of everything because they [the State Government officials] were ineffective in controlling the riot but thereafter they were very professional. But I am not so sure about this administration."

Earlier, addressing a meeting of Collectors, SPs and IGs, the CEC said the State Government officials "are working more with a partisan and biased attitude". "I wonder why we are talking here because it appears we do not have any common ground," he is understood to have told the meeting held to review arrangements for the December 1 polls to the 90-member Assembly.

Without referring to the Chief Minister, Ajit Jogi's meeting with him in New Delhi two days ago, Mr. Lyngdoh told reporters that one party had come to the Commission and said action should not be taken without a report from it. "But we do

not talk to political parties to verify a complaint. We have our own machineries and also we talk to the Chief Secretary and the DGP and get verification from them."

The CEC said the Commission had received complaints against three major political parties that their workers were distributing liquor during campaigning.

Mr. Lyngdoh, flanked by the Election Commissioners, T.S. Krishnamurthy and B.B. Tandon, said he had received complaints that the Collector and the Superintendent of Police of Bilaspur had a closed-door meeting with the Chief Minister, which was a violation of the code of conduct, and that the EC was verifying it.

Mr. Lyngdoh said he received complaints that Ministers were making official tours, using official vehicles during campaigning, were being met by Collectors and SPs wherever they went and were using government accommodation. In some cases the State plane was being used for election purposes, new projects were being sanctioned and the prospective candidates were using more than three vehicles for the campaigning, he said.

Also, objectionable advertisements were being carried in newspapers for which those responsible could be prosecuted, the CEC said. There was some apprehension that employees of various government departments would be used for political purposes and an order was issued that they be kept away from the constituency of the Minister concerned. — PTI

Govt. advt. violation of model code: EC

9/5/10
c&e

NO. 1 15/10

NEW DELHI, OCT. 14. The Election Commission today said that the release of advertisements highlighting the achievements of the BJP-led Government at the Centre in the five States going to the polls was a "clear violation" of the Model Code of Conduct and directed that the practice be stopped forthwith.

"With the announcement of the election schedule on October 6, the Model Code of Conduct came into force immediately. The display of such advertisements at the cost of public exchequer constitutes a clear violation of the Code," the Commission told the Government.

This was because it provided an "undue advantage" to the party in power and had the effect of "influencing" the voters in favour of the party in power, it said in a communication to the Cabinet Secretary and the Information and Broadcasting Secretary.

The Commission's directive came a day after the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad, had rejected the charge that the release of the ads to mark the completion of four years in office of the NDA Government was in violation of the Code saying they highlighted the achievements of the Centre and not of those States going to the polls.

The Commission said that it had come to its notice that a number of advertisements overtly and covertly depicting the achievements of the party in

power at the Centre were being displayed through newspaper advertisements and TV spots at the cost of the public exchequer. The advertisements were also appearing in newspaper editions in the five States.

Though the advertisements extolled ostensibly either the

Ban on 'Jogi bags'

NEW DELHI, OCT. 14. Enforcing the model code of conduct ahead of the coming Assembly polls, the Election Commission today banned in Chhattisgarh the distribution of school bags with the Chief Minister, Ajit Jogi's photograph embossed on them. The Commission took the decision after taking into account a representation that the Congress Government was distributing school bags with Mr. Jogi's photo free of cost through its Tribal Welfare Department. — PTI

achievements of the Government or announced projects/programmes to be taken up in parts of the country where elections were not being held, they seemed to have been issued with "an eye on the coming elections". Drawing the Government's attention to certain sections of the Code relating to the 'party in power', the Commission said "the party in power whether at the Centre or in the State or States concerned, shall ensure that no cause is given for any complaint. — PTI

'FEASIBLE, BUT AGAINST CONSTITUTION'

CEC rejects concept of simultaneous polls

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 5. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), J.M. Lyngdoh, today rejected the concept of simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Though feasible, he maintained, it was not according to the Constitution, and elections to the five States slated to go to the polls later this year would be held as per schedule in November.

Reacting to the proposal articulated by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, this past weekend, Mr. Lyngdoh — in an exclusive interview to NDTV — said there was no merit in the argument that synchronised elections to both Parliament and the State Assemblies would cut down expenditure. "I don't think saving expenditure is a very important point. It is really the democratic aspect which is more important."

Dismissing Mr. Advani's contention that frequent elections were a handicap to the ruling party, he said: "It ought not stop the Government from taking important decisions if it wants to. In fact, it has not hindered anybody for all these decades."

While the CEC did not dispute its feasibility, he

J. B. P. (CEC)
pointed out its flip side, stating that even synchronised elections would have to be staggered because of the logistics involved in conducting such a mammoth exercise.

"As you have to hold elections for the whole country, you cannot do it in one stage. It has to be done in several stages. We need (a) police force, you cannot hold elections without a police force."

According to Mr. Lyngdoh, there was no formal proposal from the Government on holding simultaneous elections. However, he did admit that the Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, had spoken to the Election Commissioner, T.S. Krishnamurthy, about this informally.

The CEC's observations came within days of Mr. Advani revealing that the BJP-led NDA Government was seriously thinking of synchronising the two elections. Also, the Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, had made a similar suggestion on the plea that the country could ill-afford the expenditure involved in conducting frequent polls, he said.

On Monday, the Congress indicated that it was not opposed to the suggestion though a formal view would be taken only after the Government drew up a concrete proposal.

6 AUG 2003

Magsaysay award for CEC Lyngdoh

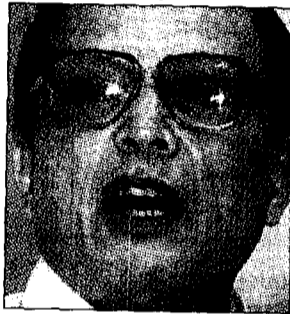
of Election (CEC)

HE- 3/17

Associated Press/PTI
Manila, July 30

CHIEF ELECTION commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh and social worker Shantha Sinha have won this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award, Asia's version of the Nobel Prize.

Lyngdoh will receive the government service award for "his convincing validation of free and fair elections as the foundation and best hope of secular democracy in India". Sinha has been honoured for her work in helping children in Andhra Pradesh. She will receive the community leadership award for "guiding the people of Andhra Pradesh to end the scourge



of child labour and send all of their children to school".

Lyngdoh said, "It (the award) is a matter of honour for the (Election) Commission. Good for the institution." Lyngdoh, 64, demits office in February next year after over two years and a half as Election Commissioner.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 1 101 223

Trucks hit the road in state

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, April 21. — Trucks resumed plying in West Bengal from 6 p.m. today after a majority of operators in the state were persuaded to dissociate themselves from the eight-day-old strike called by the All-India Motor Transport Congress.

Trucks of the members of the Federation of West Bengal Truck Operators' Association will now run within the state and to Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, where too local operators have withdrawn from the nationwide strike.

Mr Subhas Chakraborty met the association members and appealed to them to withdraw the strike. The transport minister said he had written to the Prime Minister requesting him to intervene.

The Federation of West Bengal Truck Operators' Association has four state-level demands:

- to stop overloading
- to introduce minimum freight rate
- to decentralise the issuance of national permit
- to reduce different motor vehicle fees and fines

Mr Chakraborty said he had issued notifications to district magistrates, regional transport authorities and director of public vehicles departments to off-load excess load from trucks. But he admitted that the state government would require at least two months, especially near mining or industrial areas, to set up the requisite infrastructure.

The minister said West Bengal was the only state to

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