

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi 110 001

No. ECI/PN/15/2006

Dated: 7th April, 2006

PRESS NOTE

Subject: Election Commission's decision on the report of two-member team sent to Paschim Medinipur District.

It has been alleged by certain political leaders of the CPI(M) that raids were conducted in Jamshed Bhawan, Zonal Office of CPI(M) in Keshpur, West Bengal on the orders of the Observer with the help of Central Paramilitary Forces. In order to ascertain the facts, the Commission deputed the two-member team consisting of Shri R. Balakrishnan and Shri Anand Kumar, Deputy Election Commissioners to enquire into the facts of the matter and submit a report.

The two-member team after visiting Paschim Medinipur submitted their enquiry report to the Commission today. As per the report it has been revealed that Dr. Manmohan Singh, Observer for 219-Keshpur Assembly Constituency (A.C) falling in Paschim Medinipur District, received since his arrival on 31.03.2006, repeated complaints from Shri Asish Pramanik, candidate of All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) from Keshpur A.C., alleging hoarding of illegal arms in Keshpur. The representatives of AITC also raised this issue in the All Party Meeting organized by the District Magistrate (D.M.), Paschim Medinipur on 04.04.2006 where Superintendent of Police (S.P.), Paschim Medinipur and other Observers were present. In this meeting the Observer asked the S.P. to take suitable action on such complaints in order to instill confidence in the minds of electors. He also asked the D.M. to give wide publicity to various

measures that the district administration was taking for conducting free and fair elections.

After this meeting, Shri Pramanik once again raised the issue of storage of illegal arms with the Observer. When asked, Shri Pramanik did not disclose the addresses of suspected places to the Observer as he feared leakage of information. The Observer then asked Shri Pramanik to meet him at around 4.00 p.m. at Circuit House and also told S.P. to arrange for necessary force for conducting the raids.

At around 4.00 p.m., Shri Pramanik came to the Circuit House and requested for more police parties so that raids could be conducted simultaneously at many places. Since additional parties could not be mobilized immediately, the Observer asked the complainant to meet S.P. later in the day. At around 9.00 p.m., Shri Pramanik met the S.P. and requested him to conduct simultaneous raids at suspected places. The S.P. formed four teams under the leadership of Shri Harunal Rashid, Dy. S.P. (Admn.), Shri Amitava Barma, Dy. S.P. (Traffic), Shri Swapan Samanta, CI Keshpur and Shri Madhusudan Das, DEO-III, Paschim Medinipur for the purpose. Shri Pramanik did not disclose the names of suspected places to be raided even to the S.P. but instead told him that identifier will show the exact locations where arms have been concealed. Shri Rashid, on reaching Keshpur, informed the S.P. that the identifier is disclosing names of various party offices. The S.P. then allowed Shri Rashid to conduct raids at the places shown by the identifier and, thereafter, raid was conducted at Jamshed Bhawan, Zonal Office of the CPI(M).

In the report, it has been also mentioned that Shri Md. Raffique, AITC candidate from Garbeta A.C. met the D.M. at around 8.45 p.m., independently on the same day i.e., 04.04.2006, and informed him that he had definite information

about the concealment of illegal arms. The D.M. asked Shri Raffique also to meet the S.P.

The team has concluded that the Observer had rightly sent the complainant to the S.P. for providing information and taking necessary action. As the identity and locations of suspected places where raid was to be conducted was not revealed to the Observer, he was unaware of the places to be raided. The raid at Jamshed Bhawan, Zonal Office of the CPI(M) was conducted by the team of State/District Armed Police of West Bengal after receiving the orders of S.P., Paschim Medinipur. The D.M. also clarified to the enquiry team that the news item, which appeared in Hindustan Times Daily, quoting him that the raids were conducted as per the directions of the Observer is not correct and he had given no such information to the newspaper.

The team has concluded that actions taken by the Observer were quite correct and there was no fault whatsoever on his part. The allegation that the raid at Jamshed Bhawan, Zonal Officer of the CPI(M) was conducted with the help of Central Paramilitary Forces was also not found true as it was conducted by the State/District Armed Police of West Bengal under the charge of Dy. S.P. deputed by the S.P. of the District.

The Commission has considered the report and agrees with the findings of the team. The Commission is pained to note that the facts of the case have been distorted and unfounded allegations have been leveled against the Observer who performed his duty correctly and in right earnest.

(A.K. MAJUMDAR)
SECRETARY