

PAKISTAN

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CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

This Round Table Paper (RTP) is one of the outcomes of a series of roundtable conferences arranged by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Pakistan in 2008. The KAS is one of the political foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany. Through its activities and projects, the Foundation provides an active and substantial contribution to international cooperation and understanding. The current RTP focuses on the need for a code of ethical conduct for political parties in Pakistan.

Introduction

In late February 2004, the Deputy Prime Minister of a South Asian country flew in an Air Force helicopter to address an election meeting in a provincial metropolitan town. By the time he delivered his speech, the Election Commission had announced the dates for the general election and enforced the Model Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates. The Deputy Prime Minister was thus compelled to send the helicopter back and return by car.¹ The Deputy Prime Minister was contesting the elections and his decision to send the Air Force helicopter back was in keeping with the country's Model Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates. This episode highlights the power and force of the Code of Conduct. Usually, all democratic countries adopt and follow a Model Code of Ethical Conduct for the parliamentary elections. This code is a set of guidelines laid down by the Election Commission to regulate the conduct of political parties and candidates in

the run-up to election. Whatever political parties and their candidates do in the election is watched closely by the Election Commission and also by their rival parties and candidates. Breach of the code can land the party or candidate involved in this breach into serious trouble.

Definition

The words "ethics" and "ethical" are often used synonymously with morals and ethical virtues of a person or a group of persons, and are also considered moral qualities of those individuals or groups. The word ethics has been derived from the Greek word "ethos" and morals is derived from the Latin word "mores," both of which mean habits or customs. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the ethics or morality of persons/groups, however, consists not merely of what they habitually or customarily do, but of what they think is fitting, right or obligatory to do. Actions of persons are often, but not always, a sign of what they believe: their actions may diverge from their beliefs, and both actions and beliefs may differ from what people say they ought to do or believe. Morality contains an ineluctable normative element. Whereas a person may engage in habitual and customary conduct without any reflective thought, ethics always involve reflective evaluation or prescription concerning the conduct in question. Even when "customary morality" is spoken of, the reference of the term is not merely to the customs as such – in the sense of regular, repeated sequences of behaviour – but also to the view, at least implicitly held by the participants, that what they regularly do is in some way right: it is not merely what is done, it is also what is to

1

<http://www.rediff.com/election/2004/mar/04elec.htm>

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PAKISTAN

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be done.² On the other hand, "Code" has been defined as a systematically arranged and comprehensive collection of laws, regulations, rules of procedure or conduct or a generally accepted set of principles.

Deriving from the definitions of ethics and code, as outlined above, we can define the Code of Ethical Conduct as a collection of laws, regulations, rules of procedure or conduct, or a generally accepted set of principles concerning the conduct of a person or a group of persons under various circumstances and eventualities in a certain or given sphere of human activity. It consists of not merely what the people habitually or customarily do, but in what they think is befitting, right or obligatory to do. In other words, it is not merely what is done; it is also what has to be done.³ The activities of people engaged in various professions or spheres of human life, in particular those whose professional conduct, actions and activities can affect the society or have a bearing on it are generally regulated through codes of conduct pertaining to activities and behaviour of individuals engaged in those professions or spheres of human activity. For example, doctors, engineers, architects, lawyers, teachers and public relations practitioners have a code of conduct pertaining to their respective professions. Likewise, all democratic countries have devised a model code of conduct to regulate the activities of parties and candidates during general elections.

Need for Code of Conduct

Applicable to all political parties, their contesting candidates and polling agents, the government in power and all government employees, these codes of ethical conduct aim at:

- Providing a level playing field for all parties and candidates.
- Keeping the campaign fair and healthy.

- Avoiding clashes and conflict between parties and amongst rival candidates.
- Ensuring peace and order during election.
- Ensuring that the ruling party, either at the federal, provincial or district level, does not misuse its official position to gain an unfair advantage in an election.

In other words, it means that cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister, and other holders of public offices, like provincial governors, chief ministers and town Mayors or District/Tehsil Nazims can neither combine their official visits with electioneering work nor use official machinery/personnel for electioneering work.

Public places for holding election rallies and helipads for flights in connection with elections are to be made available to all parties on the same terms and conditions on which they are used by the party in power. Furthermore, the code prohibits the ministers and other authorities from sanctioning grants and payments out of discretionary funds from the moment the elections are announced. Likewise, it prohibits publicity and advertising campaigns at the cost of the state exchequer and misuse of official mass media, like State radio or television, for partisan coverage during election. These Codes of Conduct come into force immediately after the announcement of an election and remain in force till the results are declared. In 2000, there was a tug of war, in India, between the central government and the Election Commission on the Model Code of Conduct.⁴ The government went to the Supreme Court against the Commission's ruling that the code of conduct comes into force the moment elections are announced. On the other hand, the government insisted that it should be enforced only from the date of formal notification of each phase of election. The Election Commission called an all-party meeting to settle the row. Eventually all parties, including the then ruling

² Masood, Alauddin, Study Guide M.A. Mass Communication, Allama Iqbal Open University (1998), p. 83

³ -bid -

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<http://www.rediff.com/election/2004/mar/04elec.htm>

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www.kas.de/pakistan

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Bharatiya Janata Party, agreed unanimously to support the Commission's stand on the Code of Conduct.

Code Guidelines

The codes of conduct usually bind ministers and other government authorities to scrupulously avoid either announcing or promising any financial grants to the people, or lay foundation stones, or inaugurate projects, or promise public facilities like roads, or make ad-hoc appointments in government departments. However, when the code of conduct is in force, the political parties or candidates can launch campaigns highlighting:

- their election manifestoes, detailing programmes they wish to implement if returned to power
- the strengths of their leaders, and the failures of their rival parties and leaders.

They can, however, use slogans to popularize and identify parties and issues, and they can also distribute pamphlets and posters to the electorate. The parties or candidates can hold rallies and meetings where candidates can reinforce the loyalty of their supporters, persuade and motivate voters, and criticize opponents. Such criticism should, however, be confined to the policies and programmes, past record and work of the parties and candidates, avoiding criticism of those aspects of the private life of leaders, candidates or workers of rival parties which are not connected with their public activities. Further, criticism of rival parties or workers based on unverified allegations or distortions should be avoided.

The code of conduct also forbids the parties or candidates from indulging in corrupt practices to obtain votes. For example, they cannot bribe voters, intimidate or harass them for obtaining their votes. Candidates can travel through out the length and breadth of the constituency to try to influence as many potential supporters as possible. However, when a political party or candidate wishes to hold a meeting s/he should intimate the local authorities about the

venue and time of the proposed meeting, well in advance, to enable the police/security personnel to make necessary arrangements for controlling traffic and maintaining order. The codes of conduct prohibit parties and candidates from seeking votes on the basis of caste, community, religious or linguistic groups or using any place of worship for electioneering. There also exists a "Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Contesting Candidates" in Pakistan,⁵ which also prohibits propagation against the ideology, sovereignty, integrity and security of Pakistan, or the independence of the judiciary, or defaming/bringing into ridicule the judiciary and the armed forces of Pakistan. In democratic countries, breach of the code is usually dealt with sternly by the Election Commission, who has the powers to disqualify a candidate if s/he refuses to follow the Model Code of Conduct.

Image of Parties and politicians

Like individuals, organizations and states also have images that may be good or bad depending upon how others view them. The image of entities, including political parties and political workers, is made up of a number of things, viz. their party manifestoes and programmes, past performance, response towards social obligations or sense of social responsibility, dealings with various segments of the public, response to public grievances/demands/complaints, personality of leaders, etc. If we try to find out what type of image the political parties and the political workers enjoy in this country, we find out that it leaves much to be desired. The factors, which have contributed towards creating a wrong and biased perception about the political entities, need to be identified through a proper and systematic study, which is beyond the scope of this paper. However, some notable factors, which have contributed to creating a wrong and

⁵ The code of conduct for general elections 2008 was issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan vide their Notification No. F. 2(1)/2007-Cord. of 20th November, 2007. The Annexure contains the complete text of this code.

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www.kas.de/pakistan

www.kas.de

biased image about a majority of the political parties and political workers, include:

- Reputation about lust for power and wealth.
- Tendency to change party loyalties frequently.
- Extending cooperation to despotic rulers, and bee-lining to get public offices even during periods of non-representative rule.
- Propensity to misuse of authority.
- Dismal performance in the past.
- Failure to strengthen the democratic institutions or norms.⁶
- Character assassination campaigns⁷ launched by the party in power against leaders of rival parties.
- Witch hunt of workers of opposition parties under the garb of accountability.⁸
- Media trials of workers of opposition parties.⁹

If the parties and their workers want to redress the situation and earn the respect and goodwill of the masses, it becomes paramount that they, firstly, set out their own houses in order and then endeavour to tackle the problem sincerely, in a planned, systematic and scientific manner instead of the perfunctory and ad-hoc approach that they have been following thus far. However, one needs to bear in mind that the image cannot be built or improved through ad-hoc actions and/or rhetoric alone.¹⁰ If that would have been the case, the image of a vast majority of political entities (both parties and workers) in the country would have been enviable, at least of the ones who reportedly spent billions of rupees on public-

ity, indulging in the blitz for more than a year before the actual announcement of 2008 general elections. The election results show that the public could not be swayed by rhetoric alone. In fact, one's actions, deeds and actual performance contribute to creating an impression about that individual or entity.¹¹

It has been noticed that in many a case, the leaders and workers of the party in power in this country did not care much about the public reaction to their excesses, misdoings or pro-elite policies. In the past, even when one of their staff officers invited their attention to the likely adverse public reaction, they would often respond by saying: 'Forget about the public reaction. The people would forget about this affair soon.' In deed, they were partly right because till the recent past most of the incidents of scandalous nature would generally meet their natural death after appearance in the print media once or twice. But, due to the mushrooming of the media channels, in particular electronic, such episodes now get fresh lease of life when these are repeatedly discussed, debated and analysed in various ~~consequently~~ **consequently**, the image of a number of political parties and a majority of political workers is far from satisfactory. All stakeholders need to ponder over this matter and try to find out, through sample surveys and other relevant/appropriate techniques the factors that are responsible for creating biases about the political parties and their workers. Once the causes for biased image are known, they can then take remedial steps to convert the negative perceptions in to positive attributes by appropriately tackling the causes leading to the creation of those biased attitudes. If the political parties and their workers have a positive image, it would ultimately lead to increasing their public following and vote bank and also the strength of the party concerned, ensuring it a good share in the political pie.

⁶ Masood, Alauddin, "Free, Fair Elections Must for Democratic Development," Weekly Pulse 7-13 December, 2007

⁷ Masood, Alauddin, Selling Pakistan to the World, Daily Dawn, 01 April, 2000

⁸ -ibid-

⁹ Masood, Alauddin, The fatal injury is self-inflicted, Daily Pakistan Observer, 24 April, 2002

¹⁰ Masood, Alauddin, Improving image needs good planning, Daily Dawn, 11 June, 2002

¹¹ - ibid -

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

Core Objectives

PAKISTAN

CONTACT:

DR. BABAK KHALATBARI

AUTHOR:

MR. ALAUDDIN MASOOD

July 2008

www.kas.de/pakistan

www.kas.de

At present, almost all political institutions in the country are feeble because of the frequent interruption in the political process. In view of the crucial role that the parties play in the political process, it is the need of the hour to strengthen them through a carefully conceived programme. This programme can be chalked out through strategic planning and then executed by each party independently to self-regulate its activities and also those of its contesting candidates. However, the success of this programme would largely depend upon a broad understanding and consensus among all national political parties and their workers aimed at seeking uninterrupted growth of the political process, blocking or plugging in the loopholes which encourage the establishment to ascend to power. A beginning in that direction can be made by following the course as outlined in the Declaration of Principles, the Pledge and the Model Code of Ethical Conduct for political workers.

Declaration of Principles

The political stakeholders in Pakistan need to recognize and base their conduct on the fundamental value and dignity of man,¹² holding that the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of movement,¹³ freedom of assembly,¹⁴ freedom of association,¹⁵ freedom of work,¹⁶ freedom of speech,¹⁷ freedom of religion,¹⁸ freedom of the media and, above all, freedom of the judiciary is essential for the uninterrupted continuity and growth of the political process. In serving the national interests, we the political workers of Pakistan, dedicate ourselves to the goals of accelerated growth and progress of the country, prosperity and well-being of its people, better understanding and cooperation among various pillars of

¹² Article 14, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

¹³ Article 15, - ibid -

¹⁴ Article 16, - ibid -

¹⁵ Article 17, - ibid -

¹⁶ Article 18, - ibid -

¹⁷ Article 19, - ibid -

¹⁸ Article 20, - ibid -

the state and also various communities and segments of the people.

We pledge that:

- The politics of acrimony and witch-hunt will give way to focused cooperation on matters of national interest.
- The parties will pool up their energies in nation-building.
- The parties will ensure that all pillars of the state work within those limits, as spelled out for each pillar by the Constitution of Pakistan.
- The allied parties will jointly endeavour in containing and regulating the traditional power of the establishment.
- The parties will act as watchdogs on one another

Model Code of Ethical Conduct

For achieving the common goals, as contained in the pledge, we, the political workers of Pakistan, commit and dedicate ourselves to promote and maintain high standards of public service and ethical conduct, as outlined below:

I. Personal Integrity

1. We shall maintain high moral standards and a sound reputation.
2. We shall observe the Party's constitution, laws, rules and codes.
3. We shall endeavour to promote internal democracy within the Party.
4. We shall safeguard the confidence of the Party hierarchy.
5. We shall not serve any private interest without the knowledge of the party high command.
6. We shall not seek any role in a despotic or non-representative rule.

II. Conduct Towards Public

1. We shall serve the people to the best of our abilities and knowledge.
2. We shall endeavour to commit our time and energy in nation-building activities
3. We shall not mislead the people and shall always try to present a balanced and faithful account of events.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

PAKISTAN

CONTACT:
DR. BABAK KHALATBARI

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July 2008

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www.kas.de

III. Conduct Towards Other Parties

1. We shall not intentionally injure the reputation of the leaders or workers of another party.
2. We shall cooperate with other parties in upholding this code and shall not accept members of other parties who are expelled by the parent party for breach of party constitution, rules or regulations.
3. We shall monitor the activities and programmes of other parties so as to bring their weakness to the notice of the public.
4. We shall compete with other parties in mustering the support of the masses through positive activities.
5. We shall try to promote alliances between like-minded parties on the basis of their ideology and programmes, paving the way for the emergence of a few strong parties commanding following across the length and breadth of the country.

IV. Conduct Towards Colleagues

1. We shall cooperate with fellow political workers in upholding this code.
2. We shall inform the party hierarchy if we detect that any political worker has breached this code.

We understand that:

A breach of this code can result in the cancellation of our party membership and even expulsion from the political process of those workers who join hands or extend support to despotic rulers. Once political parties approve the Model Code of Ethics by consensus, it would be for the individual parties to implement it as a sort of self-regulating code. However, political parties may set-up a joint steering committee to oversee and monitor the implementation of this programme. The parties may also like to constitute a joint working group, comprising of party leaders, which may meet once or twice a year and/or on the need basis to discuss and chalk out programmes for further cooperation for achieving the mutually agreed goals.

Mr. Alauddin Masood is an author, freelance column writer and former Editor. As a former officer of the Federal Information Group, Mr. Masood retired as Director General (PR)/Joint Secretary from the Upper House of Pakistan's Parliament – the Senate of Pakistan.

ANNEXURE

ELECTION COMMISSION OF PAKISTAN

Islamabad, the 20th November, 2007

NOTIFICATION

No.F.2(1)/2007-Cord.- WHEREAS, for the purpose of effective and meaningful consultation with the political parties, the Draft Code of Conduct for the Political Parties and Contesting Candidates for General Elections, 2007-08 was published in newspapers, giving it extensive publicity through electronic and print media in October, 2007 and was also circulated to the political parties, who submitted their annual statements of accounts as required under the provisions of the Political Parties Order, 2002 for eliciting their valuable comments/ suggestions by the 6th November, 2007 as to whether the provisions of aforementioned Code of Conduct may be retained in its present form or any of its provisions may be modified or amended or some new provisions may be added to the Code of Conduct for General Elections, 2007-08.

AND WHEREAS, the provisions of the Draft Code of Conduct as well as the comments/suggestions received from various political parties were discussed threadbare in a Meeting of the Election Commission with the representatives of the political parties held on the 19th November, 2007 and the Draft Code of Conduct has been amended/modified in the light of the decisions taken therein;

NOW THEREFORE, in pursuance of Article 218 (3) of Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, read with Articles 5(3) and 6 of the Election Commission Order, 2002 (Chief Executive's Order No.1 of 2002), and Article 18 of Political Parties Order, 2002 (Chief Executive's Order No. 18 of 2002), and all other powers enabling in that behalf, the Election Commission is pleased to issue the following Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Contesting Candidates for the forthcoming General Elections, 2007-08.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

PAKISTAN

CONTACT:

DR. BABAK KHALATBARI

AUTHOR:

MR. ALAUDDIN MASOOD

July 2008

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1. General Conduct:

(1) The political parties shall not propagate any opinion, or act in any manner prejudicial to the ideology of Pakistan, or the sovereignty, integrity or security of Pakistan, or morality, or the maintenance of public order, or the integrity or independence of the judiciary of Pakistan, or which defames or brings into ridicule the judiciary or the armed forces of Pakistan, as provided under Article 63 of the Constitution.

(2) Criticism of other political parties, when made, shall be confined to their policies and programme, past record and work. Parties and candidates shall refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life, not connected with the public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties. Criticism based on unverified allegations or distortion shall be avoided.

(3) Concerned political parties and contesting candidates may announce their overall development programme. But after the announcement of the election schedule till the day of polling, no candidate or any person on his behalf shall, openly or in secret, give any subscription or donation, or make promise for giving such subscription or donation, to any institution of their respective constituency or to any other institution, nor shall commit to undertake any development project in the respective constituency.

(4) All contesting candidates shall avoid scrupulously all activities which are "corrupt practices" and offences under the election laws such as the bribing of voters, intimidation and personating of voters, canvassing within 400yards of a polling station, holding public meetings during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of the poll by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

(5) The right of every individual for peaceful and undisturbed domestic life shall be respected, irrespective of any resentment that a political party or a candidate may have against such individual for his political opinion or activities. Organizing demonstrations or picketing before the house of such indi-

vidual with a view to protest against his political opinion or activities shall be prohibited under any circumstances.

(6) No political party or candidate shall permit his followers to make use of any individual's land, building, compound wall etc. without his permission for erecting flag-staffs, suspending banners, pasting notices, writing slogans etc.

(7) Political parties and candidates shall ensure that their supporters do not create obstructions in or disturb meetings and processions organized by the other parties. Workers or sympathizers of one political party shall not create disturbance at public meetings organized by another political party.

(8) Political parties and contesting candidates shall firmly restrain their workers from exerting undue pressure against the print and electronic media, including newspaper offices and printing presses, or resorting to violence of any kind against the media.

(9) The political parties, contesting candidates and workers shall refrain from deliberate dissemination of false and malicious information. The workers of political parties shall not indulge in forgeries and disinformation to defame other political parties/leaders. The use of abusive language against the leaders and candidates of other political parties shall be avoided at all costs.

(10) The political parties shall refrain from speeches calculated to arouse parochial and sectarian feelings and controversy of conflicts between genders, sects, communities and linguistic groups. [Section 78 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(11) Appeals to violence or resort to violence during meetings, processions, or during polling hours shall be strictly avoided. [Section 81 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(12) No person shall in any manner cause injury to any person or damage to any

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PAKISTAN

CONTACT:

DR. BABAK KHALATBARI

AUTHOR:

MR. ALAUDDIN MASOOD

July 2008

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property. [Section 81 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(13) Carriage and display of all kinds of lethal weapons and fire arms shall not be allowed in public meetings and processions and official regulations in respect thereof shall be strictly observed. Aerial firing, use of crackers and other explosives at public meetings shall not be allowed.

(14) The political parties, contesting candidates, agents or workers shall not indulge in offering gifts or gratifications or inducement to any person to stand or not to stand as a candidate, or to withdraw or not to withdraw his candidature. [Section 79 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(15) The political parties, contesting candidates and their workers shall not propagate against the participation of any person in the elections on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion or caste. Political Parties' officials, candidates or others shall not encourage or enter into agreements debarring women from becoming candidates or exercising their right of vote in an election.

(16) Ministers shall not combine their official visits with election campaign.

(17) The political parties and contesting candidates shall not procure the support or assistance of any civil servant to promote or hinder the election of a candidate. [Section 83 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(18) The political parties and their candidates shall dissuade their workers or sympathizers from destroying any ballot paper or any official mark on the ballot paper. [Section 87 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(19) No person or a political party or a candidate shall hoist or fix party flags on any public property or at any public place, except with the permission in writing from, and on payment of such fee or charges as may be chargeable by, the concerned local government or authorities. Wall chalking as part of an election campaign shall be pro-

hibited in all forms. [Section 83A of the Representation of the People Act, 1976].

(20) Section 83A of the Representation of the People Act, 1976 lays down that no person or a political party shall affix posters, hoardings, banners or leaflets/handbills larger than the sizes prescribed by the Election Commission. The Commission has prescribed the sizes as under:

(a) Posters 2-feet x 3-feet

(b) Hoardings 3-feet x 5-feet

(c) Banners 3-feet x 9-feet

(d) Leaflets/Handbills 9-inches x 6 inches

The local authority and the Returning Officer shall be responsible for the effective implementation of the provisions of this section.

(21) Issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer in the newspapers and other media and the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity shall be scrupulously avoided.

2. Meetings:

(1) The party or candidates shall inform the local administration of the venue and time of any proposed meeting at least 24 hours in advance so as to enable the police to make necessary arrangements for controlling traffic and maintaining law and order.

(2) A party or candidate shall ascertain in advance if there are any restrictive or prohibitory orders in force in the place proposed for the meeting. If such orders exist, they shall be followed strictly. If any exception is required from such orders it shall be applied for and permission obtained well in time.

(3) Organisers of a meeting shall invariably seek the assistance of the police on duty for dealing with persons disturbing a meeting or otherwise attempting to create a disorder.

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PAKISTAN

CONTACT:

DR. BABAK KHALATBARI

AUTHOR:

MR. ALAUDDIN MASOOD

July 2008

www.kas.de/pakistan

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(4) The political parties and their candidates shall not hold public meetings or rallies on main streets, and roads to avoid traffic jams and public inconvenience.

3. Processions:

(1) Processions shall not be taken out by one party along places at which meetings are being held by another party. Posters affixed by one party shall neither be removed nor distribution of handbills and leaflets prevented by workers of another party.

(2) A party or candidate organizing a procession shall decide before hand the time and place of the starting of the procession, the route to be followed and the time and place at which the procession will terminate. There shall ordinarily be no deviation from the programme. The organizers shall give advance intimation of at least 2 days to the local police authorities of the programmes so as to enable them to make necessary arrangements.

(3) The organizers shall ascertain if any restrictive orders are in force in the localities through which the procession has to pass, and shall comply with the restrictions unless exempted specially by competent authority. Traffic regulations or restrictions shall also be carefully adhered to.

(4) The organizers shall take steps in advance to arrange for passage of the procession so that there is no block or hindrance to traffic. If the procession is very long, it shall be organized in segments of suitable lengths, so that at convenient intervals, especially at points where the procession has to pass road junctions, the passage of held up traffic could be allowed by stages thus avoiding heavy traffic congestion.

(5) If two or more political parties or candidates propose to take processions over the same route or parts thereof at about the same time, the organizers shall establish contact well in advance and decide upon the measures to be taken to ensure that the processions do not clash or cause hindrance to traffic. The assistance of the local administration shall be availed of for arriving

at a satisfactory arrangement. For this purpose, the parties shall contact the local administration at the earliest opportunity but not later than 3 clear days before the date of the procession.

(6) The political parties or candidates shall exercise control to the maximum extent possible in the matter of precisionists carrying articles, which may be put to misuse by undesirable elements, especially in moments of excitement.

4. Polling Day:

(1) All political parties and candidates shall-

(i) co-operate with the officers on election duty to ensure peaceful and orderly polling and complete freedom to the voters to exercise their franchise without being subjected to any annoyance or obstructions; [Section 86 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976];

(ii) supply to their authorized polling agents badges or identity cards;

(2) Political parties shall carry out a comprehensive plan for education of voters in the manner of marking the ballot paper and casting votes.

(3) Excepting the voters, candidates or duly authorized election agents, no one without a valid pass from the Election Commission or Provincial Election Commissioner concerned or District Returning Officers shall enter the polling booths. However, foreign/domestic observers and representatives of recognized bodies will be provided free access to witness the election process on production of the identification cards/passes issued to them by the aforesaid Election Commission authorities.

By Order of the Election Commission,
(Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad)
Secretary