

OPENING REMARKS BY
MR JUSTICE TASSADUQ HUSSAIN JILLANI
HON'BLE ACTING CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER
IN THE MEETING TO BE HELD WITH SECRETARY DEFENCE,
CHIEF SECRETARIES, ETC. ON 19-08-2013 AT ECP SECRETARIAT, ISLAMABAD
IN CONNECTION WITH BYE-ELECTIONS 22ND AUGUST, 2013

Ladies and gentlemen;

On behalf of myself and my colleagues, I welcome all of you and appreciate the commitment reflected in attending this important meeting at a very short notice.

2. As you are aware that bye-elections in 42 National and Provincial Assemblies' constituencies in all the four Provinces are scheduled to be held on 22nd August, 2013. For holding these bye-elections, we have already made all necessary arrangements including printing and delivery of ballot papers in the discharge of our constitutional obligation as envisaged under Article 218(3) of the Constitution. As you are aware the Commission itself does not have an elaborate administrative machinery or force to carry out this gigantic task. However, our strength lies in Article 220 of the Constitution which mandates as "It shall be the duty of all executive authorities in the Federation and in the Provinces including the Army to assist the Commissioner and Commission in the discharge of his or their functions."

3. Credible elections are instrumental in strengthening democracy and stability of any country; and prosperity of its people depends on truly representative government, elected through free, fair and genuine elections. The more effective the elections are, the better are the chances for democracy to flourish so that the people of a country feel a sense of participation and decision making in the state affairs; enjoy fundamental rights and lead a peaceful and prosperous life as a result of true democracy. In order to ensure that the bye-elections on 22nd August, 2013 are held in a free, fair, peaceful and transparent manner, we need to take all necessary steps which help us to ensure that bye-elections are as secure, impartial and transparent as possible.

4. The purpose of this meeting is to achieve the above objective. Day before yesterday, immediately after I took oath of my office as Acting CEC, I asked for a briefing about the arrangements so far made for the conduct of bye-elections as also the

assistance being provided by the Provincial Governments, amongst others, to maintain law and order as well as for providing security at the polling stations in the constituencies where bye-elections are being held. I was informed that in addition to security arrangements made by the provincial governments, Army support has also been sought for providing security inside and outside highly sensitive polling stations. Further a notification has also been issued by this Commission granting magisterial powers to designated officer in-charge of the Army for poll day in respect of highly sensitive polling stations.

5. However, in this regard, it has been brought to our notice that due to heavy rains and flood, the Federal Government has put the army on high alert for rescue and relief operations where needed and the army which is already over-burdened with various engagements is finding it difficult to provide the requisite assistance for providing security at the polling stations as asked for by the Commission. This necessitated this meeting to consider the issues of:

- a. The availability and deployment of Army troops for providing security inside and outside *highly sensitive* polling stations and at *sensitive* polling stations where necessary.
- b. Grant of Magisterial power to the designated officer in-charge of Army and its implications.
- c. The plausibility of postponement of bye-elections due to the reasons stated by army authorities, which I have referred above.
- d. Review the arrangement made for the conduct of bye-elections by the ECP and the provincial governments including security plans.

6. Certainly, we would like to have valuable and technical input from the Director General, Meteorological Department and Chairman National Disaster Management Authority as to what may be the weather conditions in the coming days in order to ascertain whether the option of postponing the bye-elections for a week or two can be helpful in resolving the problem.

7. The ECP deeply appreciates the assistance extended by Provincial Governments, Army and paramilitary forces in carrying out various electoral activities and maintenance of law & order which helped the ECP in achieving its goal of holding free, fair and peaceful elections in the country. It was due to such collective efforts that all major political parties, civil society organizations, media and other stakeholders accepted the

results and termed the elections as free, fair and transparent with a few voices expressing reservations in respect of some individual constituencies.

8. Needless to say that these bye-elections will be complementing the general elections 2013 by filling up vacancies, which occurred during the process of general elections due to death, resignation and disqualification etc. of contesting or returned candidates and thus this exercise can be said to be the last phase of general elections 2013. The ECP expects that each and every national institution would play its due role with the same spirit as was shown in the general elections held on 11 May and help and assist us in holding free and fair bye-elections.

Thanks