

For FAIR ELECTIONS

The chief election commissioner has categorically stated that he will not resign and that he will complete the task assigned to him by holding free and fair elections. Since the government has made a commitment in writing, by signing the Islamabad long march declaration, to hold elections according to the constitution, it also cannot back out of its commitment. The ECP will have one month to conduct the scrutiny of candidates once they file their applications. But the process seems very lengthy and may take more than one month. Therefore, the ECP should start collecting the data of the sitting legislatures irrespective of the party they belong to and obtain up-to-date information about them. The information should include details of loans taken by parliamentarians, their income-tax returns, corruption or criminal cases against them, cases involving moral turpitude, abuse of power, misuse of government vehicles, foreign travels and bank accounts, properties held by them and family members, properties purchased abroad, agricultural land anywhere in Pakistan, undue promotions and educational degrees etc.

Apart from such details, the intelligence agencies may be tasked with obtaining all kinds of information about them, their family members, friends and close associates etc. Any department, organisation, bank or ministry which provides wrong information should be awarded exemplary punishment. This exercise shall help weed out corrupt people from among the current lot, giving way to a new, and hopefully clean, leadership. The nation should cooperate with, and strengthen the hands of, the CEC to make history. We cannot afford to blow this opportunity. I hope the politicians and the people of Pakistan will rise to the occasion to create a system that ensures entry of capable and deserving representatives into assemblies.

Mukhtar Ahmed

Karachi