

Governor writes to Kalam on lawlessness in Uttar Pradesh polls

Uttar Pradesh Governor T.V. Rajeshwar has written two letters to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on 'state sponsored' lawlessness during the recent civic polls in the state.

The first letter was sent by the governor's principal secretary to the president's secretary on Nov 1 with copies to Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Home Minister Shivraj Patil.

Highly placed sources told IANS another letter by the governor himself to the president was dispatched shortly after the last round of polling Nov 5.

Both letters explicitly allege 'gross misuse of government machinery' in the three-phased polling.

Though it cornered a large number of seats in smaller cities and semi-urban towns, the ruling Samajwadi Party suffered a rude setback in major cities getting only one of 12 mayor posts.

The letters highlight reports about large-scale rigging, demonstrated by the recovery of original and fake ballot-papers from different places across the state.

Specific mention is made of alleged booth-capturing in towns like Bahraich, Bijnore, Meerut and Moradabad, where supporters of opposition parties were reportedly prevented from exercising their franchise.

The letters sent from the Raj Bhavan also express doubts over the impartiality of state election commissioner Aparmita Prasad Singh - the state government is accused of promising him a prestigious position after he retires next month.

He has also been charged with taking decisions 'under the undue influence of the chief minister'. Here, the governor cites the example of the election commissioner withdrawing his own orders calling for re-poll in all places where more than 85 percent votes had been cast.

'Singh issued the order in the morning, only to withdraw it no sooner than the chief minister expressed his displeasure with the decision,' the letter states.

However, Aparmita Singh denied the allegations.

'I have conducted the elections with complete impartiality. It is a different matter that after I issued the orders for cancellation of poll in all stations where polling exceeded 85 percent, both Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kalyan Singh spoke to me to give their own reasons against the decision; so I recalled that order,' he said.

Regarding the alleged quid pro quo with a cushy post-retirement assignment offered to him, he said: 'I have already expressed my unwillingness to accept that position as it was below my status.'

Opposition parties in the state have also accused the election commissioner of partisan politics.

Both the BJP and the Congress are demanding president's rule in the state. 'At least the forthcoming

state assembly polls early next year should be conducted under president's rule,' said Congress president Salman Khurshid and BJP state chief Keshri Nath Tripathi agreed.

The chief minister's brother, Shiv Pal Singh Yadav, also the state minister for energy and public works, rubbished the demand: 'If these allegations were true then our party would have swept the polls everywhere. BJP and Congress leaders are making wild allegations out of frustration.'

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