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State Bank denies any laxity in verifying Election 2013 candidates' data

Karachi (Sep 25): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has strongly rejected the report of 2013 Election Observers that SBP did not timely provide candidates' data to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for scrutiny purpose.

In a statement issued to the media, the SBP Chief Spokesman clarified that SBP had provided complete information as agreed with the ECP and there was no deficiency or delay in supplying the required information to ECP. "A mutually agreed reporting format mechanism was developed between SBP and ECP for scrutinizing the nomination papers of contesting candidates for the election 2013. The mechanism was finalized at the highest level in meetings with the ECP which were also attended by the Governor SBP" the spokesman said.

Giving details of the agreed arrangements, the spokesman said that Returning Officers (ROs) were required to upload the particulars of candidates contesting election on the web portal of ECP for onward submission to the State Bank. In response, State Bank had to provide the required information about the defaults of contesting candidates within 24 hours. 'SBP started receiving requests from ECP through online system from March 26, 2013 and completed the process on April 7, 2013 on daily basis, and no instance of any delay was reported whatsoever,' the spokesman maintained.

The spokesman elaborated that the State Bank had made special arrangements whereby officials were deputed exclusively for the purpose and particulars of 24,286 candidates and their 110,972 family members were searched in e-CIB database and responses were uploaded without delay. The spokesman further explained that "SBP had also developed an on-line information portal for the purpose of smooth and efficient verification of the data. In this regard, ECP was requested by the SBP through a letter dated March 29, 2013 to advise all the Returning Officers to seek the verification of loan defaults as per agreed arrangements, instead of approaching State Bank directly."

Shedding light on SBP's extraordinary role, the spokesman elucidated that "Further, a Director-level official of State Bank was deputed at ECP during the entire period for coordination and on-spot resolution of any related matters. Also, a senior SBP official well-versed with e-CIB assisted the Lahore High Court in disposal of appeals of the candidates. It is important to mention that SBP facilitated the opening of bank branches on weekly holidays for settlement of any outstanding dues from the contesting candidates. Thus, the SBP carried out this task day and night in national interest."

He recalled that the role of SBP was also lauded publicly by the Chief Election Commissioner at several occasions and no lack of cooperation was ever reported by the ECP or media.