

Implement poll code, Virbhadra urges CEC

Wants Assembly elections held before Nov 5

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SHIMLA, JULY 20
Chairman of the Congress campaign committee Virbhadra Singh today met party president Sonia Gandhi and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) VS Sampat in connection with the "recent developments in the state which can hamper a free-and-fair poll in the state".

He urged the CEC to immediately impose the model code of conduct for the elections in the state in view of the "desperate decisions", which could have serious implications for the state, being taken by Chief Minister PK Dhumal to influence the outcome of the forthcoming Assembly elections. He urged him to hold the Assembly elections before November 5 in the entire state, including the tribal areas.

Besides discussing the recent organisational appointments and the constitution of the campaign committee, which caused anxiety rather than raising hope among party men, the veteran leader is learnt to have apprised the party president of the game plan of Chief Minister PK Dhu-



Virbhadra also met Congress president Sonia Gandhi and is learnt to have apprised her of the "game plan" of Chief Minister PK Dhumal.

mal. Sources close to Virbhadra Singh revealed that during the meeting, which lasted 30 minutes, he underlined the fact that the party needed to remain vigilant to foil the Chief Minister's designs. He is learnt to have expressed his dissatisfaction over the constitution of a jumbo-sized campaign committee and appointment of some non-entities as secretaries of the Pradesh Congress Committee.

Virbhadra Singh submitted an eight-page letter to the CEC explaining at length the problems faced due to the holding of elections in December in 2007. He said apart from the tribal belt, the higher areas of Shimla, Chamba, Mandi, Kangra, Kullu and Sirmaur were affected by snow and keeping this in view, polling should be held in one go in the entire state before November 5 as there could be snow after that anytime.

He also drew attention to

the "actions" of the Dhumal government and urged Sampat to ensure that all those officers who had been either given extension or re-employed be removed forthwith. The officers moved to districts from the Chief Minister's secretariat over the past three months should also be shifted to ensure a free-and-fair poll.

He said the Chief Minister should be stopped from rewarding officers, who were used for political ends for fabricating false cases against Congress leaders over the past four years and were now being given constitutional posts. He made a specific mention of Director-General of Police DS Manhas in this regard and said he had definite information that he was being appointed. The only way out to stop Dhumal in its tracks and prevent him from vitiating the poll process was to impose the code of conduct immediately.