

## **LSP welcomes SC directive to Curb offer of freebies to voters**

Written by Maharastra Administrator  
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The Lok Satta Party today welcomed the Supreme Court verdict that promises of freebies by political parties shake the roots of free and fair polls and its directive to the Election Commission to take steps for curbing the practice.

In a media statement, State Lok Satta Party, National General Secretary Surendra Srivastava said that promising freebies which have nothing to do with eradication of poverty or provision of equal growth opportunities to all solely with a view to garnering votes has become the bane of our present day politics.

Political parties can legitimately promise subsidized rice to the hungry, homes to the homeless and subsidized power to indebted farmers. But promising free TVs, grinders and mixers and gold necklaces constitutes an unethical inducement to voters.

Mr. Srivastava recalled that Lok Satta Party National President Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan had written to the Election Commission on May 8, 2008 and March 12, 2009 on the need to rein in political parties from making promises in contravention of the Constitution and public interest. Dr . JP pointed out that with the Election Commission keeping quiet over DMK's promise of free TVs in its 2006 election manifesto, the Congress was emboldened to repeat it in the 2008 Assembly elections in Karnataka. Emulating them, the TDP made a similar promise in the 2009 for AP Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

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Mr. Srivastava said that if offer of freebies is not regulated, political parties in the days to come may offer even free supply of certain number of liquor bottles to every voter.

The Supreme Court observed that promises of freebies in a manifesto do not amount to corrupt practices under the present law. Since such promises disturb the level playing field among players contesting the polls and vitiate the election process, the court directed the Election Commission to frame guidelines for regulating contents of manifestos and suggested that separate legislation should be made on the issue.

Mr. Srivastava said that the Election Commission has the power and the duty to intervene under Article 324 of the Constitution to regulate unethical poll promises unrelated to Government's constitutional responsibilities.