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## ‘Shall uphold rule of law regardless of insults’: CEC

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Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja affirmed that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will continue working under the Constitution, regardless of external pressures.

“Even if we are insulted, we will follow the Constitution and the law,” Raja said during a hearing regarding the reshuffling of election tribunals for three Islamabad constituencies on Tuesday.

During the hearing, PTI’s candidate Amir Mughal’s son requested an extension due to his father’s legal challenges, and CEC granted until the next day to arrange a lawyer. Raja also urged petitioners to submit separate applications for each constituency, raising concerns about their seriousness. PTI’s lawyer, Shoaib Shaheen, complained about not receiving the commission’s previous orders, to which CEC directed the provision of documents within five minutes and promised an inquiry into the delay. Tensions rose when Shaheen remarked that PTI felt like

“outsiders” in the current system, and Raja responded that the commission operates under the Constitution and law, regardless of insults. Shaheen denied the use of inappropriate language but was advised to consult his colleagues regarding past incidents. The tribunal hearing was later adjourned until 12:30pm, with other petitions set for October. Supreme Court’s Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail has noted that the power to appoint election tribunals rests solely with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). However, in order to ensure free and fair elections, an independent machinery is necessary. “In such a view of the matter, the power to adjudicate such a delicate task, has been assigned to the judiciary. Therefore, in the case of appointing a sitting judge of a high court, consultation with the chief justice of the high court concerned by the ECP is a condition precedent,” Justice Mandokhail said. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail was part of a five-judge bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa that on September 24 set aside a Lahore High Court (LHC) verdict in the Punjab election tribunal case. While hearing some writ petitions challenging the authority of the ECP to appoint election tribunals in Punjab, a single-member bench of the LHC on May 29 ruled that election tribunals in the province were to be appointed on the recommendation of the LHC chief justice. Yesterday, the Supreme Court (SC) upheld the Election Commission of Pakistan’s (ECP) appeal regarding the Punjab election tribunals while nullifying a previous decision made by the Lahore High Court (LHC) on the matter. The verdict was

delivered by a five-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, Express News reported on Monday. The top court had completed the hearings for the case and reserved the verdict, which was announced today. The chief justice read out the decision, confirming the approval of the Election Commission's appeal against the ruling. The court's decision was unanimous, with a vote of 5-0 and no dissenting opinions from the judges. Additionally, CJP Isa noted that Justice Jamal Mandokhail and Aqeel Abbasi had provided an additional note on the verdict.