

# Give priority to voters, Church tells candidates

BY HERALD REPORTER

PANJIM, FEB 1 — The Council for Social Justice and Peace has appealed to all candidates contesting the forthcoming elections to think of the voter first and then of themselves.

The Church has also appealed to all elected representatives to respond with accountability as they have been elected by the voters to safeguard and promote their interest and that of the entire State, always upholding moral and ethical values (not to do what you want, as a few of you have stated publicly).

According to the Church, elections to the Goa State Assembly were held thrice since 1994 (1994, 1999, 2002). During this period of 12 years the citizens of Goa have had to endure unstable disrupted governance. The main cause of this has been desire for power, individual and collective.

To wield power, most of you are collectively responsible for manipulations, defections, contrived resignations resulting in bye-elections and even dissolution of the Assembly, allegedly to pre-empt defections by a group of MLAs.

The Church has said that successive governments have resorted to unprin-

cipled means for those in power to enrich themselves at the cost of the State and MLAs have feigned ignorance of the events, clearly indicating either sheer irresponsibility or unethical behaviour.

The church has said that during these years good governance has been further hampered because of politicisation of every sphere of social life. Political interference in the 'Self-Government Institutions of the Village and Nagar Panchayats' have eroded the age-old systems, which were specially protected through the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution of India to such an extent that now Panels of this MLA and that Minister are even published in the newspapers and these Bodies work against the interest of the villagers/ citizens, at the behest of their patrons.

According to the Church by violating the Constitutional Rights of the people has exposed the Ministers utter disregard to democratic principles.

The Church appeals to all people contesting elections to remain in touch with the socio-political environment of the present time and honestly participate in 'fair and just' elections, which are due soon.

