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Chandigarh, November 5:

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Monday lambasted the Akalis led by Sukhbir Singh Badal for unnecessarily creating a law and order problem over the issue of school history books even after the government had categorically clarified that the new course books would not be introduced until the Expert Group set up to review them completes its task.

Reacting strongly to the violence triggered by Akali protesters, who clashed with the police while trying to break through barricades outside his residence, the Chief Minister slammed Sukhbir for trying to take the law into his hands and diverting public attention from the more crucial task of maintaining law and order ahead of Diwali.

In a statement, Captain Amarinder Singh said Sukhbir's action was a frantic bid to divert attention from the crisis facing the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), which was faced by an internal revolt just months before the crucial Lok Sabha elections.

The Chief Minister pointed out that he had already directed the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB) to continue with the existing history textbooks for Classes XI and XII pending completion of the review by the Expert Group. The Group has already held 11 meetings to assess the standard of the text books, with particular focus on factual and religious discrepancies, if any.

The Expert Group of eminent historians was constituted by the state government on 11th May 2018, in response to concerns raised in certain quarters regarding alleged errors and discrepancies in the syllabi of History for Classes XI and XII. The Group is chaired by Prof. Kirpal Singh and comprises Dr. JS Grewal, Dr. Indu Banga, Dr. Pirthipal Singh Kapur along with Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon and Dr. Inderjeet Singh Gogoani, both representatives of SGPC.

Captain Amarinder Singh further reminded Sukhbir that he had already also asked the Education Minister to ensure a comprehensive review by the Expert Group, taking into consideration all the complaints and suggestions received earlier.

The Chief Minister had also directed the Education Minister to ensure that individual chapters of history books are not released by PSEB, and only a textbook properly vetted and approved by the Expert Group and the Government is published after proper diligence, said the spokesperson.

Despite his categorical assertion that the students will be taught only history that is factually correct and backed by evidence, without any dilution in the coverage of Punjab and Sikh history, the Chief Minister said Sukhbir & Co. were continuing to politicize the vital issue, which showed their total lack of sensitivity towards the interests of the people of Punjab, particularly the student community.

Terming the Akali act as the height of irresponsibility, the Chief Minister said that, desperate to gain public attention, the Badals were now stooping to all lows, irrespective of the impact of their actions on the people of Punjab.

The Chief Minister urged students not to be misguided by the Akali propaganda but to concentrate on their studies with the prescribed history books (those of the 2017-18 academic session).