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Press Release

Political leaders ready for LB polls in Azad Kashmir

Participants demand fixed time frame for elections / RAWALAKOT: 7 April 2016

Amidst the election season in Azad Jammu Kashmir, the civil society and youth pressed the need for amendment in AJK interim Act 74 to bind the elected government to ensure local bodies elections in AJK. This demand came up during a policy dialogue arranged by Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR) AJK-based training and research think tank, wherein participants demanded for youth and women empowerment in the local bodies to ensure devolution of power to the grass roots.



راولاکوٹ: سی پی ڈی آر کے زیر اہتمام مباحثے میں جماعت اسلامی کے نائب امیر سردار اعجاز افضل، سردار جاوید شریف، سردار جاوید شہزاد، سردار عظیم، ارشد محمود، ڈاکٹر وقاص علی اور دیگر شریک ہیں

Speaking on the occasion, Member Kashmir Council Mr. Saghir Chughtai lauded the efforts of CPDR and was of the view that deliberate delays of successive governments in holding local bodies' elections have led to a development deficit among different regions of the state which can only be bridged through immediate transfer of power to the grass roots.

Vice President of Jamat-e-Islami Sardar Ejaz Afzal Khan spoke at length on the deliberate delay and neglect of present Government and stated that the revival of local bodies could pose a serious challenge to those who favor dynastic and hereditary politics in AJK. He vehemently supported the devolution of judicial, financial and administrative powers to the grass root level and stated that his party manifesto is very clear on youth and women empowerment. If his party comes into power youth and women empowerment would be top priority of Jamat-e-Islami.

Speaking on the event, Sardar Azeem Ex Advisor to Prime Minister of AJK and Pakistan People Party leader conceded that despite clear orders from High Court his party could not ensure the local bodies in AJK which is clear manifestation of lack of political will and seriousness on the issue. It is fact that due to the absence of local governance system, accountability of the elected representatives was compromised, which gave rise to corruption in the state said Azeem.

While presenting Pakistan Muslim league-N (PML-N) stance on the revival of local government, Mr. Javaid Sharif, PML-N leader stated that due to absence of local government and ban on student unions in AJK, we could not generate new leadership and this political space is seized by influential and rich people resulting in further aggravation of political system.

Sardar Javaid Nisar, central leader of Jammu Kashmir People Party (JKPP), stated that his party holds intra party elections on regular basis to give opportunity and space to young people. Our leadership believe to empower common citizens through democratic process, he underlined. Whenever our party will get chance to form government we would not only hold local bodies polls but also transferred administrative and financial powers to local level in true sprite.

While introducing topic, Executive Director, Ershad Mahmud briefed the participants that, CPDR is holding series of dialogues across the AJK between young people and political leadership of AJK to provide a platform to young people to communicate their aspirations and issues to their leadership for better and improved governance. We believe that empowered and awared young people can be driver of change and they should be given chances to start a debate with their leadership he added.

Dr. Waqas Ali, Director Programmes, gave a detailed presentation on the local government system in AJK and across the globe that how empowered local bodies played significant role in ensuring good governance and accountability in the world. He stated that due to limited spaces in AJK, young people are frustrated from their leadership and their deliberate alienation from political process is a serious challenge for the upcoming government.

Participants including young people, civil society member lawyer academicians vociferously demanded from their political representatives to give the constitutional cover for the local bodies' elections through an amendment in Act 1974. The participants also demanded to parties to fix the time frame for local government elections in case their party comes into power and ensure free and transparent elections in AJK.

One of the key issues emerged out from the discussion was the lack of spaces for young people to participate in active politics and their continuous disengagement from the existing system as many of them believe that existing political system promote dynastic and hereditary politics. It was demanded in the consensus point that at least 25 percent quota should be allocated to young people in local government system to empower young people.

Besides a demand was also made to give women representation in local bodies as women is one of the marginalised communities in the political system in AJK. While stressing the need to revive local government system, it was demanded that political parties should not only revive the local government but should ensure that it should have financial, administrative and judicial empowerment to make it more effective system.

Media Links:

Daily Times: [Political leaders ready for LB polls in Azad Kashmir](#)