



Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR)

Office 4, 3rd floor, VIP Plaza,
I-8 Markaz, Islamabad
cpdr@cpdr.org.pk

House No. 148, Sector F-2,
Mirpur, AJK
cpdrajk@gmail.com

www.cpdr.org.pk

Date: 10 Mar 2016

Press Release

AJK Youth urge political leaders to encourage their participation in the political process

MUZAFFARABAD: 10 March 2016

Nearly 350 young people including lawyers, academicians, political parties representatives, students, civil society activists and media personal urged political leadership of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to shun menace of dynastic politics, casteism and called for increase in youth representation in the political process in the context of upcoming elections in AJK. This demand was vociferously raised by young people of AJK in a daylong Policy dialogue on “role of political parties in promoting decision-making spaces for young people” organised by AJK based think tank “Centre for Peace and Development and Reforms (CPDR) in Muzaffarabad.



For the first time in AJK history, political leadership from the mainstream parties including leading civil society activists presented their vision for young people, which is estimated 2.9 million out of four million populations. President Pakistan Muslim League-N AJK, Raja Farooq Haider Khan, Finance Minister AJK, Chaudhary Latif Akbar, Amir Jamat-e-Islami AJK, Abdur Rashid Turabi, President (Women Wing) PTI AJK, Mrs. Gulzar Fatima, Deputy Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly Mrs. Shaheen Kausar Dar, shared their vision for young people and spoke at length on party manifestoes regarding empowerment of youth.

Dr. Waqas Ali, Faiza Inayat and Adnan Rehman Mir also shared their perspective on issues, challenges and the emerging trends of young people towards political system.

Raja Farooq Haider Khan stated that youth deserve more representation and opportunities in the current political, social and economic system as it make of 65 % of the total local population. He pledged that if PML-N gets power in the upcoming elections he would immediately announce local bodies elections with 20% dedicated quota for young people and restore student unions, which according to him is considered as nurseries of politics.

While lamenting on poor socio-economic state of young people he pointed out that AJK has 14 % unemployment ratio as compared to 4% in Pakistan. He called for uniform educational system, and empowering the youth socially, politically and economically. He said employment opportunities should not be given on the basis of fraternities, tribalism or regionalism, which is another leading cause of anxiety and frustration among the youth.

Chaudhary Latif Akbar said PPP gives highest priority to education of youth that is why his party has set up a number of higher educational institutions and medical colleges in the State. He strongly criticised the role of Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Kashmir Council stated until Kashmir Council powers are not curtailed AJK cannot be prosperous as it curtails elected government's political and financial autonomy. He offered Raja Farooq Haider to work with the PPP government to amend AJK Constitution known as Act 1974 for more prosperous AJK.

Abdur Rashid Turabi said that Jamat-e-Islami provides equal opportunities to young people and its top leadership comes from the grass-root level. He underlined the need of sustained dialogue between youth and political parties to bridge the perception gap.

Mrs. Shaheen Kausar Dar urged all political parties to ensure intra party elections and capacity building of the youth on regular basis to nurture new leadership. Ershad Mahmud, Executive Director of CPDR announced that before elections his organization will be arranging three more dialogues that would be held at Mirpur, Rawalakot and Islamabad aiming to provide platform to young people to talk to its elected leadership for better future.

After rigorous deliberation seven consensus points were put forward to all political parties reps like Political parties should discourage casteism, nepotism and dynastic politics in AJK. Parties should ensure transparent mechanisms of Intra party democracy and should focus on institutionalization of party offices. It was also put forward as consensus point that both the local

government and student unions, which are considered as breeding ground for new leadership, should be revived and made functional.

It was general sense of the interactive session that violations of merit, disparities, inequalities and injustices breed huge frustration; deprivation and restlessness that can give rise to violent tendencies. While explaining his six years long engagement with the youth of AJK, Dr. Waqas Ali held that youth was one of the most important segments of the society and well informed and vibrant youth of AJK if given opportunities can play vital role for its development. Another academician Adnan Rehman, while explaining his experience with the young people of AJK said that government should make policies to address the youth issues and involve them in policy making, legislative institutions to address their concerns otherwise they might be attracted to radical ideas.