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Timeframe for LG

Legislators affirm support for amendment in constitution

LG system needs constitutional protection to be more effective

OUR CORRESPONDENT
ISLAMABAD

Parliamentarians have pledged their support for an amendment in Article 140-A of the Constitution for providing a timeframe for holding local government (LG)

elections.

Legislators from different mainstream parties and members of the civil society at a consultative meeting on constitutional protection for local government here on Thursday said that without LG system the definition of state was incomplete.

They said that the strengthening of local government required both, constitutional protection as well as a change

in mindset of the provincial governments to devolve powers at the district, tehsil and union council levels.

In the absence of local government, democracy is meaningless, the participants said.

Parliamentarians who participated in the discussion included senators, Mohsin Laghari, Sitara Ayaz, Farhatullah Babar and Mian Ateeq; MPAs Maliha Khan and Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli, former

MNA Dr Araish Kumar as well as MNA Naeema Kishwar.

Laghari said that Clause 10 of Charter of Democracy (COD) called for holding LG election but after the 2008 general polls both PPP and PML-N did not hold LG elections until the Supreme Court intervened.

He said that some political parties were still not happy with the plan to hold local polls.

"It has become a psyche

not to share power with others and politicians want to retain maximum influence," Laghari said.

After promulgation of Punjab Local Government Act by the current provincial government, many powers were taken back from local governments which were devolved to them after the 18th Amendment, he said.

Senator Babar said that the real issue was that no one

wanted to give up authority.

"Through the 18th amendment provinces took powers from the centre but they do not want to transfer it to local governments," he said.

Kishwar, who is also member of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms, said that the committee proposed 145 days for re-election of local government.

"The committee is also

working on other concerns such as number of polling stations and proposed setting up a polling station after one kilometer," Kishwar said.

Maliha Khan said that LG was the basic unit of the democracy. The democratic process would remain incomplete without strengthening the LG system.

Strengthening Participatory Organisation Chief Executive Naseer Memon remarked that

LG system needed constitutional protection to be more effective and efficient because it would not be able to function without legal protection.

Centre for Civic Education chief Zafarullah Khan said that LG elections should be held directly on special seats. Aurat Foundation Chief Operating Officer Naeem Mirza said that provincial governments had used delaying tactics in holding LG polls.