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# Legislators hesitant to devolve powers, says PPP senator

Farhatullah Babar says civil society should send observations on LG polls to electoral reform committee

By A Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Though devolution of power is mandatory under the law, parliamentarians, especially members of provincial assemblies, still hesitate to share powers with the local government representatives.

This was stated by PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar at a consultative meeting on "Local government's constitutional protection" held at a local hotel on Thursday. The event was organised by AAWAZ programme's consortium partners — Strengthening Participatory Organisation, Aurat Foundation, Sungi and South Asia Partnership Pakistan.

Senator Babar said laws on devolution were made but they were not being implemented properly.

"Local government elections have been held in two provinces and time to time by-elections are also held, so the civil society should minutely observe them and send their observations to the Election Reforms Committee (ERC) headed by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar," he said.

"Moreover, the civil society should also write to the ERC, whose term is going to end in October, for a briefing on the progress of its work." He said financial, political and administrative devolution was also not being carried out in accordance with Article 140 of the Constitution.

MNA Naeema Kishwar of the JUI-F, who is also a member of the ERC, said the committee had proposed holding of LG polls 145 days after every general election. The establishment of polling stations after every kilometre has also been proposed, she added.

The sub-committee of the ERC will put the recommendations on the National Assembly website so the civil society and human rights activists can give their suggestions, she said.

Senator Aneesa Zaib Tahirkheli of Qaumi Watan Party said no provincial government should conduct indirect elections on the women reserved seats.

"It is not only against the law but also deprives the voters of their right to choose," she said.

Maliha Khan, member of the KP assembly, said the local government system was the basic unit of democracy. The democratic process will remain incomplete without strengthening the local government system.

Chief executive of Centre for Civic Education Zafarullah Khan said like Balochistan and KP the local government elections on special seats should also be held directly in Punjab.

Chief executive SPO Naseer Memon said the local government system needed a constitutional protection to be more effective and efficient.

Chief operating officer Aurat Foundation Naeem Mirza added that provincial governments avoided devolving power to the local governments and always used delaying tactics to hold the LG elections.

Sajid Mansoor Qaisrani of the Sungi Development Foundation said according to the 18th amendment it was the responsibility of the provincial governments to play their role in devolving powers to the districts.