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Gender based election monitoring

By A Reporter

ISLAMABAD, Feb 28: This time around there will be a strong emphasis on monitoring the elections from a gender perspective, said a local and international organisation, here on Thursday.

The above said statement was made by Sabra Bano, Director-General of Gender Concerns International (GCI), a Netherlands based organisation, and Prof Farkhanda Aurangzeb representative of Aurat Foundation, during a joint press conference.

Sabra Bano, while talking to media persons said that during the elections, 15 representatives of GCI would come to Pakistan for monitoring purposes. Plus 50 trained Pakistani women would assist the foreign delegates, she added.

“Monitoring will be done from a gender perspective and for that purpose NGOs working for women rights and civ-

il society will also be involved. Right of vote for the people who belong to different minorities will also be ensured,” she said.

“After events in the Middle East — Arab Spring — GCI monitored elections and transition of governments in Libya, Tunis, Morocco and Egypt. Now we have decided to monitor elections in Pakistan. Primary goal of GCI is to ensure that women exercise their right of vote,” she said.

She said that the other objective was to ensure that the gender agenda was addressed by the newly elected government and women’s political participation was promoted in the post-election setup in Pakistan.

On the other hand, Prof Farkhanda Aurangzeb of Aurat Foundation said that her organisation was working for

the participation of women in elections and would play a role in the upcoming elections.

Another advantage of election monitoring would be that government would be under pressure to ensure transparency because of presence of monitors, she said.

While replying to questions of media persons she said that in the past women were stopped from taking part and casting their votes in the elections but all that had changed now, she said, adding that the new rule of Election Commission of Pakistan declared that if there were less than 10 per cent votes of women, results of that constituency would be declared null and void.

“It will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior to provide security for voters and NGO workers,” she said.