

What is the Significance of Local Government System in a country? Discuss the reasons of repeated failures of the efforts in Pakistan to establish a stable local government.

(Answer)

## Local Government

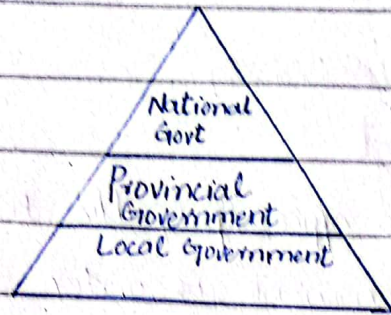
The United Nations office of public Administration defines Local Government as under:

"A political subdivision of a nation or state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected."

## Introduction

Local government is the lowest tier of a government in which local affairs of the governance are managed by the individuals elected from that locality. The concept of local government centers on the fundamental principles of democracy where powers of the State are devolved at grass root levels ensuring wider participation of the public in the political and administrative structure of a state. The structure

of local government can be compared to a pyramid, with national government at its apex, and the local governments at its bottom and the provincial or regional governments in the middle.



Many political reasons are hurdles in the vogue of local government system in Pakistan. As local governments are only established under the rule of military dictators. Civilian governments are reluctant in establishing local governments.

## Significance of Local Government System

Local government system carries a significant place in global democracies and developed nations. It is the basic tier of any government at local levels because various issues are solved at lower levels of governance with immediate responses. The significance of local government is evident from the preamble of "European Charter on Self Government" as under:

- (i) Considering that local authorities are one of the main foundations of any democratic regime.
- (ii) Considering that the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that are shared by all member states of the Council of Europe.
- (iii) Considering that it is at local level that this can be most directly exercised.
- (iv) Convinced that the existence of local authorities with real responsibilities can provide an administration which is both effective and close to the citizens.
- (v) Aware that the safeguarding and reinforcement of local self-government in the different European countries is an important contribution to the construction of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and the decentralization of powers.

This charter truly explains the significance of local government and local authorities in the progress and governance of every country. Through local government system the governance issues are resolved at a greater extent.

## Reasons of failure of efforts in establishing stable local governments in Pakistan

It is evident from the history of Pakistan that political governments are not inclined to establish local government institutions. On contrary, local government bodies were established by military rulers but these institutions could not continue after their ouster from the powers. As, political civilian governments were not enthusiastic to establish local government institutions due to which these institutions continue to remain weak. The major hurdles in establishment of strong local governments in Pakistan are as follows

### (a) Reluctance of Provincial governments to devolve powers:

The provincial governments are reluctant to devolve powers to local tiers. The provincial governments find it more convenient to run local areas governance through bureaucrats who are under direct subordination of respective provincial governors. They will always obey the orders of provincial governments. On the contrary, if

local institutions are run by the locally elected representatives, they are not directly subordinate to the provincial governments. There is also a likelihood of opposition parties winning local governments slot thereby limiting the influence of provincial governments in that area.

### (b) Bureaucratic hurdles:

The bureaucracy serves as another hurdle in the establishment of local governments on strong footings. The powers being exercised by bureaucrats at tehsil, district and divisional level primarily pertain to the local governments. The bureaucrats would be deprived of such powers and the perks associated with such powers if local governments are run by the locally elected representatives.

### (c) Resistance from the federal and provincial legislators to share political positions

The provincial and federal legislators hold a political position of prominence in their respective areas or constituencies. Elections of local government representatives will bring

new individuals holding influential positions in these areas and such individuals will share political status, position and powers with these legislators which may not be acceptable to the later.

#### (d) Politics of development fund:

The politics in Pakistan revolves around development funds which is primary domain of local governments. If local government institutions are run by the elected representatives, the development funds will be placed under their control. The provincial governments are therefore resistant in establishing local governments and then letting them spend the development funds which runs the risk of weakening their political strength.

#### (e) Aloofness of the Public

Due to frequent interruptions and derailments, local governments could not perform exceptionally so as to command the trust of public at large. The public generally remains aloof to the local government so there is no pressure

upon the provincial governments from the public to establish local bodies.

### (f) Violence in local bodies election:

The local feuds especially in rural areas mar the conduct of local governments elections.

The local feuds based upon Briadrisam, properties and other enmities are fanned during these elections which often lead to violent confrontations. The instances of violence create wrong impressions about local governments bodies and give an excuse to provincial governments to avoid holding local governments elections.

### Conclusion

Although local governments are very important as a tier of government. Local governments resolve the governance issues at local levels.

But, Pakistan is facing various hurdles in the establishment of stable local government system. In spite of various efforts in establishing stable local governments, these hurdles remained a whopping cause to fulfill the aim of establishing stable local governments. The civilian governments should have to realise the importance of

local government in the progress of country. Political biasnesses should be kept aside in the establishment of local governments. By removing the mentioned hurdles, the institution of local government can perform effectively in Pakistan that will minimize the governance issues of Pakistan.