

11/11/25

M. AWAIS

TEST SERIES

GK - II

CURRENT AFFAIRS

TEST - 3

Q2 18TH AMENDMENT : DEVOLUTION OF POWER

(I) Introduction

Pakistan since its inception has been mired in a crisis of center-province tussle. Upon the separation of Bangladesh, a unanimous consensus gave birth to the 1973 constitution, broadening the role of the provinces. However, it was not until the pivotal 18th amendment that true devolution of power took place. Although, now the provinces enjoy much more respective authority, this has not adequately translated into devolution of power at the local level. Districts remain devoid of true authority, consequently looking towards the provincial capital for relief. Subsequently, it has led to a crisis of governance, necessitating adequate measures for relief.

(II) Factors perpetuating lackluster devolution of power to the district level

(A) Continued Federal overreach in provincial matters

FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT

Continued retention of
authority on devolved
subjects

PROVINCIAL
LIMITATION

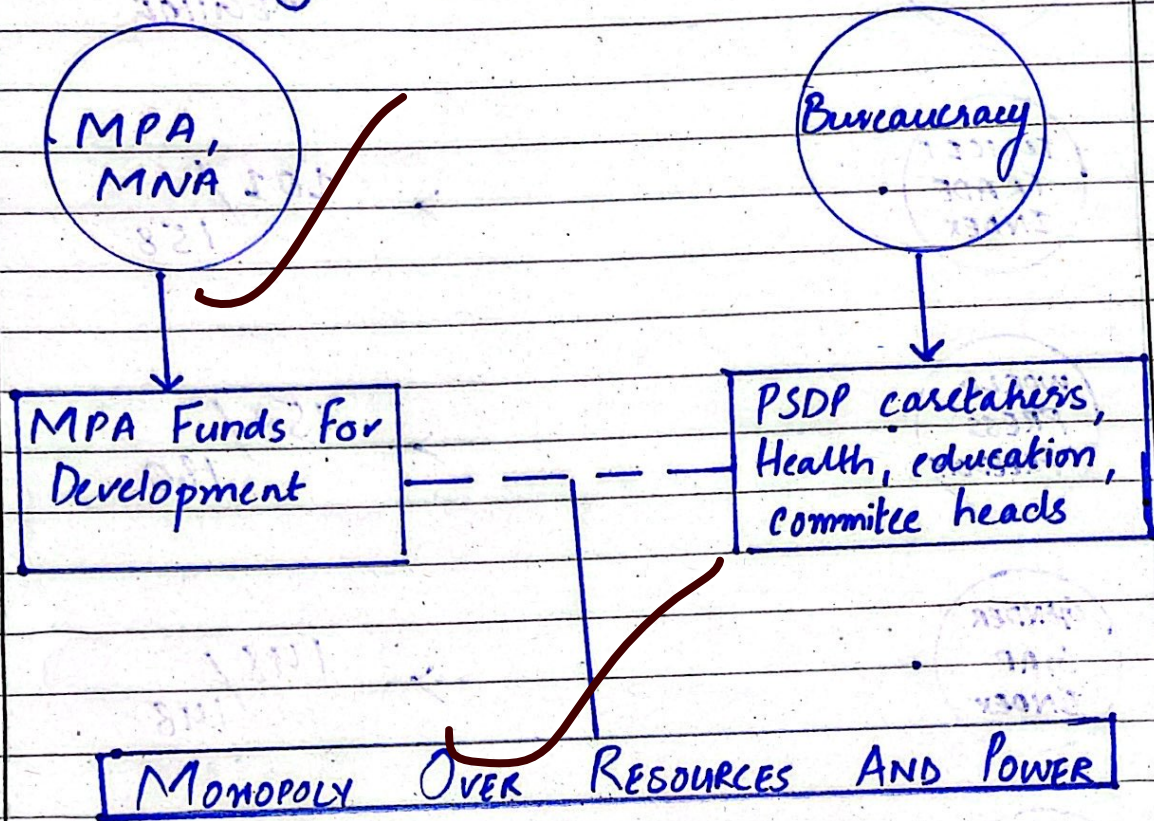
Despite the abolition of the concurrent list, the federal government continues to have a disproportionate influence on these subjects. As a result, both provinces and districts remain devoid of actual authority. Law and order policies, mines and mineral policies, and trade and commerce remain heavily within the ambit of the federal government - despite devolved subjects. The result of which is the disempowerment of the districts.

DISTRICT
DISEMPOWER-
MENT

(B) Institutional incapacity at the district level

Capacity for effective delivery of services at the district level remains non-existent. Many districts lack basic infrastructure, logistical, and man-power tools to ensure basic services. Hence, making devolution not only difficult but structurally impossible.

(C) Legislative and bureaucratic hold on authority.



Both legislative and bureaucratic nominees maintain a stringent hold on resources and authority. Consequently, positioning themselves as linchpins in the system. According to Anatol Levin, an effective devolution would mean relegation of these offices.

(III) Effects of centralization of power at the provincial level:

(A) ~~Power~~ service delivery

Pakistan lags behind in most measurable scales of governance:

HDI

AUTHORITARIAN
REGIME

ILLICIT
TRADE
INDEX

101/
158

WORLD
PRESS
FREEDOM

158/
180

GENDER
GAP
INDEX

148/
148

FOOD
SECURITY

295 MILLION
ACUTE HUNGER

POPULATION
GROWTH

MORE THAN
GDP

ECONOMK
CONDITION

26th TRANCH
PSPD CUT
SERVICE SPENDING cut

By ignoring problems at the local level,
and necessitating approval from the provincial

center, service delivery has taken a huge hit.

(B) Overburden on provincial capacity

By centralizing all powers within the provincial capital, its institutions have been overburdened. Impending backlogs of cases are a case study of this crisis. Public Service Commissions, Civil Secretariat, and judicial ^{branches are} backlog replete with work.

(C) Legislation and Policy making ignored

The actual task of MPA's and bureaucrats - law and policy making - has been ignored. Pakistan is still utilising colonial era laws in the form of Land Revenue Act, Police Order, and Tax Collection Powers - all bygone of a past era.

(IV) Solutions to stimulate devolution of power towards districts

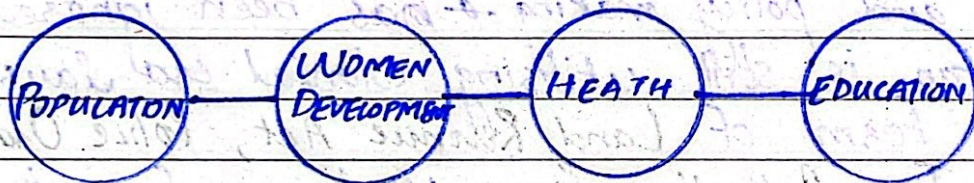
(A) Direct Funding of local government by the federal government

The Federal government can circumvent provincial centralization by directly funding local government through the NFC mechanism. Through the act of fiscal empowerment, local governments can be made much stronger.

(B) Enacting Judicial oversight for timely local government elections

Judicial oversight can ensure that regular elections are held for local governments. Any deviation must be taken in the strictest of sense by the courts. Courts can even carry out local elections through the utility of judicial officers.

(C) Capacity building for local-level institutions



ALL REQUIRE A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

These departments must be district-specific, with only oversight from the center. Training, funding, infrastructure, and capacity-building must be undertaken and ensured.

(D) Constitutional measures for district empowerment

The 1973 constitution, despite overtly stating the role of local government, is ignored.

Amendments must be undertaken to emphasize its the role of local governments even more. Suggestions can entail: Constitutional protections for district officers and representatives, direct NFC Funding Court review for elections and plans for capacity building.

(v) Conclusion

In essence, despite the progressive steps undertaken in the 18th amendment and NFC awards, districts have yet to see its benefits. Owing to structural, and governance limitations, along with the monopoly of interest groups provincial centers have emerged as the new power centers. Consequently, they have impeded vital reforms and halted many progressive endeavours. Vital reforms must therefore be enacted to ensure that districts are equally as empowered as provincial and federal strongholds - For collective benefit.