

PRESS RELEASE

CPHD urges to hold Local Bodies elections on joint electorate bases

Commission for Peace and Human Development (CPHD) has urged the government to hold the forthcoming LB elections on the basis of joint electorate system.

Expressing his views on the statement of the Pakistan Election Commission to hold the forthcoming Local Bodies elections on separate electorate basis, Waseem Anthony, the Executive Director of the Commission said that the double standard of holding the general elections on joint electorate and LB elections of separate electorate basis, will, in no way, pave the way to national integrity and religious harmony.

Showing his concern on the lack of interest shown by the religious minorities in the by-election held on March 28, 2004 he said, that over 90% minority seats in Punjab could not be filled in during the local government by-polls due to non-filling of nomination papers. The minorities in Punjab showed extreme apathy towards the local government by-elections as only 196 candidates submitted their nomination papers against 1209 vacant seats in the province. This is only 16 percent of the total vacant seats reserved for the minorities. Out of this 18 withdrew their nominations and In actual only 95 minority candidates are contesting on 37 seats, while candidates on the 83 seats were declared elected unopposed. The total contestants (95) were just 7.8 % of the notified 1209 vacant seats. In NWFP also 668 seats reserved for minorities remained vacant. These results shows complete apathy of religious minorities in any election on separate electorate basis.

He said that holding the LB elections 2000-2001 on the basis of separate electorate system also not only resulted in the form of boycott from the religious minorities, but a rejection of the system from progressive minded people from majority was also seen, which is a clear disagreement shown with this system from the civil society of Pakistan.

He said that National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) earlier submitted a draft of proposed amendments in the Local Government ordinance vis-à-vis the introduction of Joint Electorate System in the LB polls to prim minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali but there were no positive result

Giving reference of Mr. Daniyal Aziz, NRB chairman's meeting with the new prime minister Mr. Shaukat Aziz and his statement after that on Thursday, that the prime minister appreciated the devolution of power plan and showed his interest to strengthen the system, Mr. Anthony said that the system cannot be strengthen unless the flaws like separate electorate system is not abolished for it.

Also commenting on NWFP minister for Local Government and Rural Development Sardar Muhammad Idrees's statement that four provincial governments had agreed to bring certain amendments to the Local Government Ordinance, 2000, to remove controversies and confusion, he said that the biggest controversy and confusion of the

electorate system still lies there in the form of separate electorate and which is to be addressed immediately and first of all.

He urged the government to hold the elections on the basis of joint electorate at every level and make the joint lists of the Pakistani voters to leave out a symbol of prejudice and religious discrimination from the society.

Waseem Anthony
Executive Director

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