**Pakistan Needs Fair Elections**

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The recent majority 3-2 judgment of Supreme Court issued in Suo Moto No 1 of 2023 has resolved all present constitutional and legal controversies, and has further clearly held that it is the mandate of Constitution that elections are to be held within 90 days as the assemblies of both provinces of Punjab and KPK are dissolved before completion of their Constitutional terms, thus directions have been accordingly issued to the President, Governor KPK and the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Free, fair and transparent elections are significant and important for any democratic country in world and especially for Pakistan in the present political situation. The democratic process in the country and political stability can only be completed and continued through free, fair and transparent elections. Transparent elections and stable political processes are very important and pivotal for the governance in any country and would either greatly advance or set back a country’s long-term democratic development resultantly impacting both social and human development.

Every Pakistani has firm believe that without free, fair and credible election process and without introducing democratic culture within political parties, there would be no vibrant democracy and political stability in Pakistan. The basic principle for credibility of election in future would be that the whole process should stand on the principles of transparency, fairness, inclusiveness, accountability, free from malpractices and has given equal opportunities to all who would participate in the process and that the outcome as well must reflect the will of the people.

Impartial electoral framework and credible administration is important for free, fair and transparent elections. Everyone in country expects that the elections should be held, organized and conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with the constitutional provisions and every participant of election process should be provided a level-playing field.

Election Commission of Pakistan is important and permanent institution established under the Constitution of Pakistan and has mandate under Article 218(3) to organize and conduct the elections and to make such arrangements as are necessary to ensure that the elections would be conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law, and that corrupt practices would be guarded against. Article 219 of Constitution has prescribed that Election Commission shall be charged with the duty of preparing electoral rolls for election to the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and local governments, and revising such rolls periodically to keep them up-to-date, organizing and conducting election to the Senate or to fill casual vacancies in a House or a Provincial Assembly, appointing Election Tribunals and the holding of general elections to the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and the local governments.

The legislatures have strengthened the functions of Election Commission through Articles, 213, 215 and 220 in Constitution and of Election Act, 2017, providing tenure of security to Chairman and members of the Commission and has bound all executive authorities in the Federation and in the Provinces to assist the Election Commission in the discharge of their functions. Simultaneously, the Election Commission has also been conferred powers under Article 19 of the Political Parties Order, 2002 to make such rules to regulate the working of political parties registered with them, and for achieving that purpose Election Commission had notified the Political Parties Rules, 2002 with the approval of federal government.

Supreme Court of Pakistan and all High Courts have also discussed and commented time and again about the functions and mandate of Election Commission through their various judgments that Election Commission has all powers to ensure that the elections in Pakistan are organized and conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law and all corrupt practices are guarded against.

Impartial electoral framework and credible electoral administration is also important for free, fair and transparent election. Everyone in country expects that the elections should be held, organized and conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with the constitutional provisions and every participant of election process should provide equal level playing ground. In present political scenario, Election Commission should take all measures in letter and spirit for implementation of election laws before, during and after the elections and to ensure that the whole election process would have the foundation of trust, credibility and fairness, otherwise and there would be hue and cry like any other previous election, which the country would not afford bear such bad political consequences. Rudimentary steps should be taken to make sure that all political parties in Pakistan are implementing the relevant laws especially adhering the provisions of Political Parties Rules, 2002 within their parties and submitting regularly such documents and accounts details well in time to Election Commission which required them under the laws while they functioning. Thus it is very important that the present majority judgment of Supreme Court regarding holding general Elections of provincial assemblies of Punjab and KPK be implemented in letter and spirit and the process be held and completed as per Article 224(2) of the Constitution.

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