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Press Release

Research report points out issues of young Kashmiris

Ershad says British Council report to help new Kashmiri govt in decision-making

MUZAFFARABAD: A research report published by the British Council and launched by the Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms (CPDR) has recommended to all Kashmiri political parties to pay deeper attention to enhance qualitative participation of the young people in the political process.



Nearly 150 academicians, representatives of different political parties, lawyers, young people including students, and civil society activists participated in the discussion about the issues of the young Kashmiri people in the context of the report findings.

Azad Jammu Kashmir Finance Minister Chaudhary Latif Akbar, former Kashmiri prime minister Farooq Haider, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Gulzar Fatima, Faiza Inayat of the British Council and CPDR Executive Director Ershad Mahmud were among the speakers.

In the opening session, Faiza shared the key findings and recommendations of the report. Engaging nearly eight hundred young people from all three divisions of Azad Jammu Kashmir in the research process, the report highlighted unemployment as one of the major issues of young people, besides poor infrastructure and other governance issues.

The report also underlined the lack of opportunities and vacancies in the political parties, unemployment, socio-economic inequality, scanty means of recreation, social service deficits as well as identity crises as the main issues faced by the young people of Kashmir.

The report recommended more opportunities for the young people in politics, activation of the student unions, promotion of merit and justice and improvement of institutional capacities. The report also stressed the need to create different means of entertainment for the youth, which will tackle their increasing health and psychological issues. The research recommended paying greater attention to the public infrastructure and the healthcare services.

Addressing the ceremony, Farooq Haider said that the youth deserved more representation and opportunities in the current political, social and economic system as they make 65 per cent of the total local population. He pledged that if his party, the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), gets power in the upcoming state elections, he would immediately announce local bodies' elections with 25 per cent dedicated quota for the young people.

He said that he would hold student union elections, which according to him, were nurseries of politics. "If my party comes in power we would seek expert advice from Pakistan on issues like economy and governance," he added. He said that almost all sectors of the government were overemployed and were least productive. He stressed the need to introduce performance-based management in all sectors of the government to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Criticising tribe-based system, he said that the jobs should not be given on the basis of fraternities, tribalism or regionalism, which is another leading cause of anxiety and frustration among the youth. On the occasion, Latif Akbar said that the Islamabad-based Kashmir Council remained the key obstacle in the development of the Kashmiri state and demanded for more proportionate representation in the refugees' seats in the coming elections.

He said that these 12 seats of the refugees in Pakistan had always been decisive but remained heavily under the influence of the government of Pakistan over there. He also criticised bureaucracy for fomenting favouritism in departments and also for deliberate negligence in performing their routine work. Former Kashmiri lawmaker Gulzar Fatima said that her party provided equal opportunities to young people, both male and female.

She also said that majority of the leadership comes from the grass-root level. She urged all political parties to ensure intra-party elections and capacity building of the youth on regular basis to nurture new leadership. "British Council will continue to provide dialogue opportunities to young future leaders as well as the technical support for policy formulation to upcoming government in the region," a representative of the British Council Malik Wasim said.

Concluding the event, Ershad said that such reports would add to the existing literature and would help in guiding the young scholars to further build on these sources. He said that such reports would also help the new government in more informed decision-making for young people.

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