

Local Government System in Pakistan: From Challenges to Resilience

Panel Discussion

This panel will provide an in-depth overview of the local governance system in Pakistan, tracing its historical evolution and analysing its status, challenges, and recommendations for improvement. The history of local governance in Pakistan has been one of the significant experimentations and shifts, primarily influenced by military regimes. While constitutional mandates now exist for local governance under the 18th Amendment, provinces have often been reluctant to fully empower local bodies. In this context, several key points will be explored regarding local government in Pakistan. The Constitution, through Articles 32 and 140-A, mandates the establishment of local governments and the devolution of political, administrative, and financial authority.

However, local government structures vary across provinces, with distinctions between urban and rural councils, except in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where councils are not classified as such. Despite the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which aimed to devolve powers to local governments, many provinces have been reluctant to fully implement these changes. While KP and Sindh have made some progress in this regard, Punjab and Balochistan still need to ensure that their local government systems are appropriately functional. The discussion will focus on strengthening local governments in line with constitutional protections, aligning provincial laws with federal frameworks, empowering local governments, and increasing the representation of marginalized groups. Strategies for empowering local governments to establish meaningful grassroots democracy will also be examined.

On the other hand, under SDGs 7 and 11, given the increasing importance of integrated development planning, the discussion will touch upon local governments' capacity to effectively manage public services, facilitate economic opportunities, and promote infrastructure projects, especially in the energy sector. This includes local authorities' potential involvement in managing community energy initiatives, supporting small-scale renewable energy projects, and improving energy efficiency in local facilities. Such actions are crucial for not only meeting local needs but also enhancing resilience against various challenges, including economic and environmental pressures.

Panel Organisers

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