Passed in April 2010, the 18th constitutional Amendment in Pakistan was heralded as the most comprehensive reform package after the 1973 constitution. Prior to the passage of the amendment, marred by 17th Amendment and Legal Framework Ordinance (LFO), the constitution of Pakistan was de-shaped and mirrored more of a quasi-presidential rule where all the constitutional and administrative powers were centered in the (dictatorial) president. Thus, after return of the civilian rule in 2008, the political forces in Pakistan unanimously demanded to repeal the 17th amendment and bring about a balance between powers of the President and the Prime Minister, and in authorities of the center and the provinces.

Responding to the demand for constitutional reforms, the 18th amendment introduced 102 amendments in the 1973 constitution and did a good job in transferring a large number of powers, responsibilities, and institutions to the provinces; enabling them to effectively and efficiently respond to the development needs of the masses without getting into the rigmarole of plethora of approvals from the Federal Government. The reforms introduced by the 18th amendment were widely appreciated, particularly by the smaller and less developed provinces of the country; unbeknown to the fact that there was little capacity to comprehend and utilize the authorities on part of provinces to deliver on the increased expectations.
Despite its passage over four years ago, two successive governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have made no progress on implementation of 18th amendment in letter and spirit. This was discussed during a one-day conference on ‘Citizens’ Oversight on Implementation of 18th Amendment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’ organized by the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI).

18th amendment, passed in April 2014 was heralded as one of the most comprehensive constitutional reform package after the 1973 constitution. The respective amendment introduced 102 amendments and transferred constitutional, legislative, policy formulation, administrative, and financial powers to the provinces concerning 17 ministries and departments related to social welfare and public service delivery.

Considered as a pre-requisite for strengthening of the federation through empowering federating units, the amendment faces a number of challenges to its implementation. Some of the challenges highlighted during the conference included lack of capacities of the respective politicians, public officials, and masses at large, confusion on understanding of roles and responsibilities between province and the federal government, and lack of an operational framework that may serve as a guiding principle to the much longed for implementation of the amendment.

Given these challenges, speakers and participants of the conference agreed on following measures: Respective policy makers, public officials, journalists, civil society representatives, and citizens should be educated on the contours of 18th constitutional amendment; a formal consultation process should be started where input from respective communities and other stakeholders should be solicited and documented; capacity of the political representative and higher public officials should be built; the federal government should prepare modules and booklets that may serve as reference points for the public officials and policymakers alike; an annual scorecard should be conducted to measure progress on implementation of the respective amendment.
The conference was attended by Speaker Provincial Assembly Asad Qaiser, Minister for Education Atif Khan, member Awami National Party (ANP) Haji Adeel, Senior Journalist Raheem-ullah Yousafzai, and other senior politicians of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, ANP, and Pakistan Peoples’ Party.

**Media Coverage:**

**Speakers highlight issues impeding 18th Amendment implementation in KP**

**Bureau report**

PESHAWAR: Politicians, academics and journalists here Tuesday highlighted the issues needing attention of the government and all other stakeholders for the implementation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

They were expressing their views at the Provincial conference on Citizens’ oversight on implementation of 18th Amendment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held at a local hotel. The day-long event was well-attended by people from different walks of life. The conference was organized by the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI). The CPDI’s Syed Kausar Abbas conducted the proceedings.

The CPDI executive director Aamer Ezaz welcomed the guests and its manager, researcher and development, Faryar Naeem, made a presentation highlighting the findings of a study by the CPDI post-18th Amendment in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the education, health and food and agriculture sectors. The findings showed that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ruled province was lagging behind in implementing the 18th Amendment by making the required policies for the 17 devolved departments.

A number of politicians from several political parties spoke at the conference. They included the ruling PTI’s Asad Qaiser, who is speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, and Education Minister Mohmammad Atif Khan, Jamat-e-Islami’s Inayatullah Khan who is senior provincial minister looking after the local government ministry, ANMs Haji Mohammad Adeel and Sardar Hassan Babak and Qasmi Watan Party’s Merej Humayun.

They hailed the 18th Amendment as a historic document achieved political consensus among all the parties and a landmark achievement in Pakistan’s constitutional history granting unprecedented autonomy to the four provinces. They stressed for timely implementation of the 18th Amendment to benefit the masses.

Academics A Z Hilali who made a hard-hitting speech criticizing the PTI-led provincial government’s performance and challenging its priorities, and Bilal Durrani who felt the 18th Amendment was no more than a piece of paper as there had been no proper implementation yet. Journalists Asim Khan, Fareeha Afzal and Rahelullah Younus also expressed their views at the conference.

The proceedings were interrupted a few times by a political activist who alleged that fertile land was being forcibly purchased from landowners in Peshawar and its suburbs for housing projects that would benefit the rich and the resourceful. In particular, he highlighted the proposed Defence Housing Authority project in Bajaur area and alleged that army personnel were pressuring the landowners to provide their agricultural land for the project.

Speaker Asad Qaiser asked him to see him later to discuss the issue and promised to look into it.