

## **AJK SCBA shows concern over recent proposal for creation of new electoral constituencies in AJK:**



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MIRPUR (AJK): Jan 2: Supreme Court Bar Association of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) has expressed serious concern over the recent proposal by the Chief Election Commissioner of AJK to create new electoral constituencies in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

“The AJK SCBA believes that this proposal deviates from constitutional principles and will unnecessarily burden the people and resources of the state”, an AJK SCBA press release issued here on Thursday said.

The PR continued as saying “the argument moved by the Chief Election Commissioner, suggesting that additional constituencies will increase salaries and privileges, is contrary to reality. In AJK’s parliamentary system, public representatives not only receive salaries and privileges during their tenure but also enjoy lifelong pensions after completing their five-year term”.

Moreover, family pensions, unlimited travel allowances, overseas medical treatment, and other benefits are also provided to them, it said.

The AJK SCBA strongly emphasizes the need to enact legislation to annul or cancel the pensions of ex-legislative members of the AJK Assembly. These funds should instead be redirected toward the welfare of the poor, with a focus on improving healthcare facilities and expanding educational opportunities. Allocating these resources to hospitals, particularly for life-saving drugs and critical medical equipment, and enhancing educational infrastructure will benefit the most vulnerable segments of society.

Furthermore, the proposal to base constituency divisions on communal lines, rather than adhering to constitutional principles, is alarming. Such divisions are likely to facilitate the entry of specific individuals into the assembly while undermining the rights of others. This proposal contradicts the principles of constitutional supremacy and rule of law and imposes an unnecessary financial strain on the state's resources.

The Bar Association proposed that the funds saved from avoiding the creation of additional constituencies should be utilized for addressing fundamental needs. District headquarters should be improved to ensure the availability of essential healthcare facilities. The current lack of basic services in hospitals and other public sectors underscores the urgent need to allocate resources effectively.

“It is also imperative for the Government of AJK to address the issues highlighted in various reports and the media. These include deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate healthcare services, and the absence of basic facilities for the public. Immediate action is required to resolve these issues and ensure that public resources are used judiciously to bring positive change to the lives of the people”, the PR said.

“The Supreme Court Bar Association of AJK reaffirms its commitment to upholding constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental human rights. It will continue to fulfill its constitutional and legal responsibilities to safeguard the rights of the people and ensure that the state’s resources are utilized efficiently and for the welfare of the public”, it added.

The AJK SCBA underlined that as per the AJK constitution Act 1974, EC is primarily assigned to conduct fair, free and transparent elections only while delimitation of constituencies are conducted against available number of constituencies as provided under the constitution. Such suggestions for making increase of constituencies by Chief Election Commissioner in particular having incomplete commission is not warranted as per law. CEC, a few days before his retirement from the office on completion of his stipulated period in the office in the coming days, surprisingly proposed increase in number of seats in the Azad Jammu Kashmir legislative assembly which seems tantamount to open pandora box of demands to make such increases in the electoral

constituencies in the state, from different corners of AJK in the future, the AJK SCBA PR concluded.