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Suspension against law: experts: PEC elections halted

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KARACHI (January 06, 2011) : The National Assembly Standing Committee on Science and Technology has directed the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) to halt the on-going election of engineering council being conducted under PEC Act, 1976. The directives were issued following Standing Committee's meeting held in Islamabad on December 24, 2010.

It further recommended that election must be held under the new PEC Act Amendment Bill 2010 which was going to be passed by the National Assembly in a few days as clear and transparent election procedure was prescribed in the new Act. Following the receipt of directives, the PEC Chairperson directed on December 31 to immediately suspend the election process, temporarily, and has called an emergency meeting of PEC governing body in Islamabad on January 8 for confirmation of suspension.

The suspension of engineering council election has come as a surprise move as, according to legal experts, the election process, once started, cannot be stopped halfway. The election schedule was announced following 9th meeting of PEC governing body held in Islamabad on October 30, where it was decided that the elections for the executive committee for 2011-2013 will be

held as per provisions of the Act as it stood prior to Ordinance IV of 2004, and under the procedure laid down in the PEC byelaws 1976 in vogue at present.

The same had also been endorsed by the Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs. Further, the governing body, in the same meeting, had also constituted an election committee for holding elections of executive committee 2011-2013.

Consequent to the above, the election committee started its work by holding its first meeting on November 11 and with the approval of election committee the process of election was started by publishing an advertisement in the newspapers on November 14. The process was continuing and the first unopposed election result was announced on December 15.

However, on December 24 the National Assembly standing committee on Science & Technology held a meeting and directed the Ministry of Science and to withhold the PEC elections. A total of 97 days are required for the completion of the entire election process. It may be recalled that the governing body members of PEC had unanimously resolved in the 9th meeting held on October 30 as under:

-- That the election of chairman, vice-chairman and 50 executive committee members of PEC for the term 2011-2013 should be held under the PEC Act 1976 as it stood on November 24, 2004, which stands effective on the lapse of PEC Ordinance XLIX of 2007.

-- That the election should be conducted as per the schedule given in the working papers of 9th governing body meeting without any further delay.

-- That the election committee be formed on October 30, 2010 in PEC governing body meeting and it should follow the approved schedule of 90 days starting from Monday November 1, 2010 and vote counting completing on Friday January 29, 2011.

-- It was further resolved that on December 31 the existing governing body should cease to function, inclusive of chairperson and vice-chairman.

-- That all the executive orders will rest with election committee for the purpose of conducting election as per rules till the new elected body takes over the charge. It was also resolved that the sitting Registrar will act as Secretary to the election committee at PEC-HQ.

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