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Ward-based governance for capital stressed

Staff Correspondent

The wards in Dhaka city should be given more decision-making power to develop a ward-based democratic local governance structure, said Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, former adviser to a caretaker government, yesterday.

The central government refuses to delegate decision-making power to the local government, he told a roundtable on “Politics of Urban Local Governance: A Case of Dhaka City” in the capital’s Brac Centre Inn.

Presenting a joint keynote speech, Mohammad Sirajul Islam and Harun-or-Rashid, research associates at the Institute of Governance Studies (IGS) in Brac University, said the central government held the power to appoint the chief executive of the city corporation or take any institution or project off its hands.

The local government bodies lacking autonomy face even more problems when the mayor and the central governance belong to opposing political blocs, they said, adding that ex-mayors Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Mohammad Hanif lacked cooperation from the state, as they held position when their rival political parties were in state power.

The management of the city is wholly dependant on a political loyalty structure where hooligans lie between the state and the citizens, undermining the people’s direct access to services and the representatives’ answerability to the citizens, according to the speech.

Unelected officials holding control of the city’s local governance is unconstitutional, said Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman, a professor of the public administration department in Dhaka University, referring to the absence of an elected administration in the Dhaka city corporation since May 2007.

Dr Rizwan Khair, director of IGS, which organised the roundtable, and Executive Director of IGS Dr Sultan Hafeez Rahman also spoke on the occasion.