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Military courts cease to function today

Amir Wasim | Updated March 31, 2019



PTI govt faces an uphill task of giving a new lease of life to these courts.— AFP/File

ISLAMABAD: The military courts that had been set up under the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2015 to try civilians on terrorism charges finally ceased to function today (Sunday) as their second two-year constitutional term expired at midnight.

The government, which has already decided in principle to give another extension to the military courts for two more years, is still struggling to seek the cooperation of the opposition parties over the issue as it does not have the required two-thirds majority in any of the two houses of the Parliament to carry out the constitutional amendment for the purpose.

Take a look: [*Shahbaz to 'think about military court extension' if approached by PTI*](#)

The government had earlier planned a meeting of the parliamentary leaders and heads of political parties for a briefing on the issue of implementation of the NAP on March 28, but it had to cancel it following the opposition parties' decision to boycott the event due to the prevailing tense political atmosphere in the country.

Short of majority in parliament, PTI govt faces an uphill task of giving a new lease of life to these courts

Sources in the government told Dawn that the draft law to give second extension to the military courts had been prepared and the two ministries concerned — law and interior — had already initiated the process of reinstating the military courts even before the expiry of their two-year term on March 30.

There has been no official data available about the cases heard and tried by these military courts. The National Assembly, however, had been informed in November last year that the military authorities had to decide 185 terrorism-related cases before expiry of their two-year term in March.

Editorial: [*Extending military courts, again?*](#)

In a written reply to a question raised by MNA Mohsin Dawar, Defence Minister Pervez Khattak had informed the National Assembly that since the launch of the military operation Zarb-i-Azb, the interior ministry had referred a total of 717 cases of terrorism to the military courts. Of the total cases, 185 were still under process and they had to be decided by March 30 when the two-year term of the courts would expire.

Giving details of the cases decided by the military courts, the minister had said that a total of 478 cases had been decided, which meant that the conviction rate of the cases was more than 60 per cent.

He said a total of 284 convicts had been awarded death sentences and 56 of them had already been executed. Similarly, he said, 192 convicts had been awarded rigorous imprisonment, two accused

acquitted and 54 cases dropped due to technical reasons.

Federal Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhry, when contacted, said the government had already decided to engage the opposition to take it into confidence over the issue as without their support the period of the military courts could not be extended.

He said the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf believed that the military courts set up through a political consensus under the NAP against terrorism in 2015 had delivered and even the Supreme Court had upheld the establishment of these courts.

On the other hand, the Pakistan Peoples Party, which had previously taken a tough stance on the issue and extended only conditional support to the previous government of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz over the issue, is again opposed to the idea of giving an extension to the military courts to try civilians on terrorism charges.

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