

Dhaka, Monday, February 24, 1997

Subscribers' Woes

Telephone subscribers in some areas of the metropolis are presently going through the hoop as a result of bureaucratic indecision and discrimination. A four column spread down the front page of vesterday's The Daily Star brought to light the suffering of city dwellers who are being forced to pay heavily both for extension of the life of an outdated technology as well as authorities' failure to streamline the process of conversion into a newer and better one. A recent World Bank study, said the report, found subscribers under the analog system to be prone to an annoying and troublesome pattern of being successfully connected to the desired destination only after a general attempt of three and even after that there is no guarantee that he or she will land at the correct place. The unholy alliance of this disadvantage and unduly and disproportionately inflated bills often make subscribers curse their decision of ever investing in modern telecommunication technology.

The whole issue of subscribers' sufferings smack of a diabolically arbitrary policy, better, nopolicy, being followed currently by the concerned department of the government. While many exchanges are sitting on surplus digital connections--the type capable of shedding much of the problems and pains of the analog system which is now as old as the hills-some are languishing from the apathy of the authorities regarding

automatic conversion.

In some cases subscribers under analog system have been advised to switch to the digital system on their own meaning additional spending for conversion. It is unjust because there cannot be two systems for people of the same city. If automatic conversion is not a problem for the subscribers of one area or locality why should those of the others be out of reckoning for this privilege? After all, they are all subscribers, bona fides consumers of a service.

Apparently, palm-greasing and the presence of people who can exert influence on authorities are proving the deciding factors in the consideration of an area to be brought under the digital system. This is insufferable particularly in a country where subscribers have to pay more than most countries for telecommunication service which is

poor to say the least.

The government should immediately get a move on for streamlining the operations of the T&T so that corruption trickling down from the top may not contribute to the growth of the irregular and corrupt practices. Because it is the general subscribers and not the bigwigs who always suffer. It is here ,a pattern though . Not long ago the Telecommunications Minister harped on the irregularities of the law-makers who despite getting telephone allowances were found as substantial contributors to T&T's huge burden of arrears. Together with the implementation of effective measures for the recovery of back-logged bills we, urge the authorities to thrash out the factors leading to subscribers' sufferings sooner than later.

For More Investment

Our trade fair which should be considered a showpiece of our industrial performance as well as a sort of measure of foreign companies' confidence in us. The 122 foreign and 192 local establishments represented at this year's month-long international trade fair certainly corroborate the growing confidence in our industrial and commercial ability. But what we need in particular is substan-

tial investment in areas where we have perennial problems. The first step, let us repeat, is to bring foreign investment. For this to happen we need appropriate framework so that the investors have no reasons to fear for their money. We suggest a drastic reform in this area which gives full protection to a foreign investor's money.

This done, the government has to improve per formances in areas like transport, telecommunication and power as part of the government's campaign for inducing more investment — particularly foreign. At the same time it has to be noted that the law and order situation is still far from the ideal and far from congenial for trade and investment. As long as terrorists and extortionists continue to operate in business and industrial areas almost without facing any stiff challenge, productive and commercial activities cannot flourish in a desirable manner. Decisions relating to industrial production and promotion depend largely on the existing socio-political environment. Beyond the policy framework therefore the government needs to look at all these issues of national concern. The government's success will depend on its ability to create an image that about business, it means busi-

Boi Mela and Cleanliness

Ekushey Boi Mela or the commemorative book fair in connection with February 21, Language Martyrs' Day is growing both in time and the number of visitors. But what about the cleanliness of the atmospherics of this annual and crowdpulling bibliopolic exhibition? The rubbish culture, seemingly so inveterate in our national psyche, has invaded here too to tell on the aesthetic appeal and space of the precinct. And the most culpable agents for this sordid reality are the different stalls, particularly those dealing in comestibles. The ones that beg for the ready reference in this connection are the sellers of sugar cane juice who more often than not would indulge in the practice of heaping the extracted remnants behind the stalls. No less guilty are the vendors trading in snacks. In tandem with the more unscrupulous section of their customers, these people are equally responsible for the extension of the domain of rubbish.

The organisers of the fair should enforce a stipulation upon these traders to keep the rear or the front of their stalls clean. These should be dealt in the most uncompromising manner. Personnel engaged in vigilance should be empowered with the authority to forfeit the right of the traders found wanting in observing the daily practice of cleanliness operation.

Speaker and the Constitution

will resign from the office of the Speaker if I fail to show that Banga bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is still recognised by the

Constitution as the father of the

nation" - Speaker Humayun

Rashid Chowdhury The Speaker's quotation was reported in the Daily Star on 19th February 1997. The news report of the same day said that the Speaker gave his interpretation of the Constitution by saying it is the Constitutional obligation for all to accept Sheikh Mujib as the father of the nation. It was only a few weeks ago that I wrote in this daily of the danger of Speakers hastily giving interpretations of the Constitution, as the Deputy Speaker had done regarding Article 73A. As predicted then, the matter is before the courts. Like the old saying. Speakers should not step in where angels fear to tread, because it is not their function to interpret the Constitution. That is the sole preserve of the

Supreme Court. A Speaker's ruling on rules of procedure of the Parliament. on proceedings and the business of the House, on what is to be debated and who should speak etc. are final and the internal proceedings of Parliament are not reviewable by the courts. But when a Speaker gives a ruling on a constitutional point, it is not a ruling, but a mere opinion — one to which the other 329 members may rightly differ, and the question of such ruling being binding on anyone doesn't arise. Let us now look at

some facts before us. The Constitution: Our Constitution comprises a Preamble (which strictly is not an integral part of the Constitution, but an expression of peoples will and a statement of how the Constitution came into being) articles 1 to 153 (divided into 11 Parts), and 3 Schedules (the original Constitution had 4, but by Nazim Kamran Choudhury

The Speaker has said that he will prove that Sheikh Mujib is recognised by the Constitution as the father of the nation. His saying so alone is not sufficient as the ultimate interpretation of the constitution lies with the

Supreme Court.

the 2nd Schedule was omitted by the 4th Amendment). It is the articles 1 to 153 that provide for all the laws that govern the Constitution. Anything not contained in these articles and Schedules is not contained in the Constitution. The Constitution was enacted and adopted on the 4th of November 1972 and soon after, it was published officially. The Constitution did not have the words " father of the nation" in any article or Schedule. After major amendments of the Gonstitution, fresh editions of the Constitution incorporating the amendments are published. The 1st Amendment took place on 15th July 1973, the 2nd Amendment on 22nd September, 1973, the 3rd Amendment on 28th November 1974 and the 4th Amendment on 25th January 1975. A fresh edition of Constitution incorporating all these changes was published by the then Government on 20th March 1975. There were no words "father of the nation" in any of the articles or Schedules. A further edition was published in 1979 and the latest edition in 1991 (after the 12th Amendment). In no edition do the words "father of the nation" appear. So where is

the confusion. The 4th Amendment: Each new proposed law is introduced in Parliament as a Bill, and if adopted, it becomes and Act of Law. This is also true of Constitutional amendments. The 4th Amendment is officially Act 2 of 1975. Each Act has an introduction and a number of sections (clauses). The 1st section gives the short title of the Act and in the case of Act 2, 1975.

dictment of her administra-

Maladministration or cor-

behind. Still, it is recoverable.

Bhutto has introduced to Pak-

istan's political scene may en-

country. She has said repeat-

edly that she had 'suffered' at

the hands of Punjabis because

she comes from a small

province. In the process, she let

loose demon of provincial

chauvinism, which may be dif-

ficult to restrain even in the

name of Islam, the religion of

Nawaz Sharif, a Punjabi, may

turn out to be a real antidote for

ethnic unrest. He can string to-

gether estranged Baluchistan,

fractured Sindh, domineering

Punjab and autonomous Fron-

tier. The Punjabis are more or

less what other parts of Pak-

istan thought about them. But

Nawaz Sharif may be able to ar-

rest the trend. Confabulations

at Lahore, my last stopover,

suggest that the city will con-

tinue to be Pakistan's political

capital. It should. Benazir

Bhutto, who seems to be prefer-

ring the neutral territory of Is-

lamabad, will be well advised to

make Lahore as her headquar-

ters. Punjab has to be taught, if

it cannot learn on its own, how

to play an all-Pakistan role. At

present, it is too parochial, too

power possessive.

In one way, the sweep of

95 per cent Pakistanis.

of telephone and so on.

section I says "This Act may be called the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975." Aside from section 1, this Act has 34 other sections (1-35). Of these, 23 sections deal with amendments to articles of the Constitution. 4 sections substitute articles of the Constitution, 2 sections insert new articles, 1 section insert a new Part (Part 6A, National Party, BAKSAL) and 2 sections omitted the Second Schedule and paragraph 12 of the Fourth Schedule. Every section that deals with Articles of the Constitution begins with what the section proposes. For

example, section 2 says: 2. Amendment of article 11 of the Constitution. - In the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, hereinafter referred to as the Constitution, in article 11, the comma and words ", and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured" shall be omitted.

In one stroke, people's participation in administration was removed. This would only return to the Constitution after passing of the 12th Amendment in 1991. Similarly, all the other sections up to section 33 made specific changes to articles and

Schedules. However, sections 34 and 35 were different as they did not propose any changes to the Constitution. They were merely one-time enabling acts to give effect to certain changes. The

sections are reproduced below: 34. Extension of the term of the first Parliament. - Notwithstanding anything contained in

the Constitution, the Parliament functioning immediately before the commencement of this Act shall, unless sooner dissolved by the President. stand dissolved on the expiration of the period of five years

from such commencement. Thus with one stroke, the life of the 1st Parliament was extended without any election. Once the life was extended, this section became redundant and irrelevant, and as it was never designed to be a part of the Constitution, it does not appear in it. The same is the case with section 35, reproduced below:

35. Special provision relating to the President. - Not withstanding anything contained in the Constitution, on the Commencement of this Act. -

(a) the person holding office as President of Bangladesh immediately before such commencement shall cease to hold. and vacate, the office of President of Bangladesh: (b) Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman, Father of the Nation, shall become, and enter upon the office of President of Bangladesh and shall, as from such commencement, hold office as President of Bangladesh as if elected to that office under the Constitution as amended by this Act.

Section 35 (a) cost President Mohammadullah his job. By section 35(b), Sheikh Mujib, for the second time, become a nonelected President of Bangladesh. The Act was passed in less then 15 minutes and with the passage of the Act, and with Sheikh Mujib automatically entering the office of President, section 35 became redundant

and irrelevant, and that is why it was never proposed to be, nor became, a part of the Constitution. However, even in this section, the words "Father of the Nation" are merely descriptive of the person, and do not confer any legal sanction.

The 4th Amendment was never repealed in entirety, but through a gradual process. many of the affected articles were omitted (Part 6A) or again amended. Many changes like the basic Presidential structure remained till the 12th Amendment. Many newly inserted articles like article 73A have remained (with some restrictions) till now. Some members of the government benches have argued that section 34 and 35 of Act 2,1975, were never repealed. True. They were never repealed became they were never a part of the Constitution. You cannot repeal what does not exist. The Constitution, as I have said earlier, comprises articles 1 to 153 and Schedules First, Third and Fourth, nothing else. Prefaces. Appendixes detailing Constitutional amendments. Notes, etc are merely for information, and have no legal status. That is why most editions of the Constitutions do not con-

tain them. In an article published in The Daily Star on 23rd February, Barrister Rafigul Hug also argues that section 35 of Act 2 of 1975 was never repealed. He says "It remains part of the Constitution though never incorporated in the body of the Constitution, published from time to time by various governments." The legal entity of the Constitution is its body

(articles 1 to 153 and Schedules 1, 3 & 4); it has no tail. The title of section 35 also gives us a clue. It is called "Special Provisions Relating to President", and once this special provision was acted upon, it became redundant.

Father of the Nation: As I

had earlier said, the words "father of the nation" do not appear anywhere in any edition of our Constitution, including the edition published immediately after the 4th Amendment in March, 1975. For that matter, with the exception of Pakistan (were Mohammed Ali Jinnah' is recognised as the founder), no Constitution of any democratic country has a father of the nation. Mahatma Gandhi is not recognised as the father of nation in the Indian Constitution, though many consider him so. Again, many do not. A schoolboy in the US if asked, may say that George Washington is the father of the nation; but the US Constitution doesn't recognise him as such. Issues such as these are best left to time and history. Who knows, if the Awami League continue to be democratic in action rather then in words, after five or six decades. Sheikh Mujib may be accepted by the majority of Bangladeshis as the father of our nation.

The Speaker has said that he will prove that Sheikh Mujib is recognised by the Constitution as the father of the nation. His saying so alone is not sufficient as the ultimate interpretation of the constitution lies with the Supreme Court. If the Speaker is confident of his position, let him ask the Government to refer the question to the Supreme Court under article 106 and their opinion will then set to rest this contentious issue. The sooner done, the better it will be for Parliament and this coun-

The author, a former MP, is a business executive, columnist and researcher.

Ten Days in Pakistan

Every time they put faith in rulers, every time they are cheated. Politicians have exploited them for their personal ends. There is the same nexus between the bureaucracy, police, criminals and politicians in Pakistan as in India

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

sembly. But most of Leghari's president from the constitu-

has to be supreme.

Preparations are already

afoot to challenge the 8th

amendment 58(26). Nawaz

Sharif's party, Muslim League,

expects that along with its al-

lies, it will get a majority in the

Senate (elections are in March)

as it has done in the National

Assembly. Then they can effect

however, arise if and when

Nawaz Sharif joins issue with

the President on the Council for

Defense and National Security.

It will be a tough fight. All the

three chiefs of services and the

chief of general staff are the

council members. Its authority

extends to all defence, economic

and law and order problems

A serious situation can,

a change in the constitution.

was given a visa to Pak istan after a lapse of two years. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had not liked some of my writings where I had found fault with her functioning. In fact, if one were to assess her role, her intolerance to criticism would stand out. What her husband Asif Zardari, this time Mr 100 per cent, did to the state only highlighted how corrupt was her governance.

She never outgrow her love of the dynasty, first the Bhuttos and then the Zardaris. And, over the years, she became so distant from the cadres of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) that most of them did not stir out either to woo the electorate or to cast even their own vote. Hence her rout at the polls. She did not win a single seat in the National Assembly from Punjab and the North West Frontier

Province. Yet, a decade ago she led the party to victory when it was stuck in burden of promises and engagements in the wake of her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution. She was then the people's catharsis whereby they purged their sense of guilt for not having protested against his hanging. They made her Pakistan's prime minister twice. She failed them on both occasions, the second time more than the first. She was no liberal, no reformer, rather a

face of feudalism and graft. When I reached Karachi which has returned to normalcy, the city was agog with rumours that the Supreme Court would restore her government. She may now say that she knew it beforehand, casting aspersions on the court's credibility. But she took rumours so seriously that she asked her party's stalwarts to reach Is-

lamabad. It turned put to be a The real problem is that of President Farooq Ahmed Khan mere wishful thinking. The verdict, was a trenchant in-Leghari, who is enticed to Islamabad but who wants to protion: misuse of power, tapping ject a political agenda from Lahore. He wants to be recognised as a Punjabi so that when the ruption leave unhappy traces chips are down, he is not considered an outsider. The land-The ethnicity factor Benazir slide victory by Nawaz Sharif has caused an upset. Leghari would have been happy if danger the very integrity of the Nawaz Sharif had been depen-

dent on his men to have a clear

majority in the National As-

men have lost, including his

son. And the quirk of circum-

stances has made him depen-

dent on Nawaz Sharif. As the

latter has said, the National

Assembly will consider

whether to continue the 8th

amendment, the 58(2b) and the

Council for Defence and Na-

thrown the gauntlet to Leghari,

who is in no position to pick it

pended to the constitution by

the late Zia-ul-Haq, states that

the President can dissolve a

popularly elected government

at the centre and in the states at

his will. Benazir Bhutto was

dismissed first under the

amendment. Nawaz Sharif was

its second victim and Benazir

The 8th amendment, ap-

tional Security. In a way, he has

has been sent out again. Article 58 (2b) is still more dangerous. The Supreme Court has uphold the contention that the material against a government can be collected even after it has been axed. No government worth the name can live with posterior indifferent. The armed forces, which have a say in the running of political apparatus in Pakistan, may not object to the end of dyarchy, the prime minister drawing his strength from people and the

Nawaz Sharif welcomed the council's formation before. If he wants to challenge it now, he will have to do it quickly when the people are still behind him. Maybe, he should first strengthen popular support. And this is dependent on how he reduces prices, which went up abruptly in the last few

regime. In fact, the price rise cost her dearly in elections. The straight way to cut prices may be to allow import of goods from across the border, India, BETWEEN THE LINES

so that the haulage charges are less. Nawaz Sharif has argued for economic ties with India during his pre- and post-election speeches. But can he do so before settling the Kashmir problem, a one-point programme of Islamabad so far? Will the armed forces allow tion. An elected government

It all depends on Nawaz

months of Benazir Bhutto's

Sharif, whether he wants to cut through the ticket of prejudice and bias against India. He would need not only courage but also determination. He has also talked about curtailing defence expenditure. This entails building up the people's strength visa-vis those in the khaki. It has not happened in Pakistan so far. Benazir Bhutto made up even with the executioners of her father for the sake of prime ministership. Chalking out a line, which does not take into account the military, is desir-

able, for democracy to take roots in Pakistan. Still, it is difficult to imagine Nawaz Sharif doing so.

Yet, Nawaz Sharif has no alternative to economic ties with India and cut in defence expenditure. He has the power to do so because the people have given him all the strength he wanted in the National Assembly. If he takes it easy and fails to make any difference in the living conditions of his people, the opinion can turn against him in six to eight months. His failure does not mean the return of Benazir Bhutto but probably the end of whatever democratic system prevails in Pakistan.

Even after 50 years of independence, people in Pakistan remain patient, credulous and hopeful. But then they are like people in India or elsewhere in the subcontinent. Every time they put faith in rulers, every time they are cheated. Politicians have exploited them for their personal ends. There is the same nexus between the bureaucracy, police, criminals and politicians in Pakistan as

What they admire about us is the way the Supreme Court is exposing the corrupt in high places. And they have real respect for the democratic system which the country has been following. Indian bogey does not sell as much as before. People want to have amicable relationship with Indians. Many believe that their daily hardships will see the end if the two countries come closer. Kashmir has not receded into the background. But economic problems

seem to be having precedence.

Air pollution

Sir. In the editorial on air pollution in Dhaka, it was stated that the Environment and Forest Minister has tough environment protection law on

I believe that such laws are already in place and merely require adequate enforcement by police and other agencies.

A large percentage of the pollution is created by diesel engines in which the injectors and injector pumps have not been properly calibrated. Equipment for calibrating injector pumps is readily available throughout Bangladesh but technicians do not have access to written specifications to adjust the injector pumps to deliver the correct amount of fuel and tend to set the pumps to deliver excess fuel which creates vast clouds of black smoke.

Most of the cars now imported to Bangladesh from Japan are capable of running on, and in fact are tuned for, unleaded petrol. Some of these cars are already fitted with catalytic converters to reduce noxious exhaust emissions. Contrary to this statement, catalytic converters are expensive, especially when coupled with the computerised electronic engine management system used to control emissions on cars.

There are several steps which can be taken to reduce pollution effectively but would require cooperation from all

concerned agencies. They are: 1) Provision of technical data for all makes, models and types of diesel engines to allow correct pump and injector ser-

2) Provision of lead-free petrol in two octane ratings and the discontinuation of production and sale of leaded petrol.

3) Ban on the importation of cars without catalytic converters and engine emission con-

4) Making service stations supply only premixed fuel with correct amounts of oil added. for baby-taxis and other twostroke engine vehicles.

5) Enforcing the present regulations regarding air pollution by use of suitably trained squads with the power to order vehicles off the road and submission for re-examination after repair.

6) Setting up vehicle examination stations to monitor vehicle condition by checks in every six month, as is done in other countries. Only when steps such as

these are taken will we be able to breathe clean air in all areas of this country. M J Kellie

BE (Mech), ASAE, IDGTE Banani, Dhaka

Sub-Regional grouping and transit

Sir, After Indo-Nepal Friendship Agreement of 1950 which clipped independence and sovereignty, trade, foreign relations and transit facilities and also after Indo-Bangladesh 25-year Friendship Treaty which deprived Bangladesh of its rightful share of the Ganges water for more than 20 years. the New Delhi rulers have now come forward with a new idea of sub-regional cooperation among Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and seven eastern states of India at a time when Nepalese people are demanding the repeal of 1950 Treaty and Bangladesh-India Friendship Treaty is scheduled to expire on March 18, 1997.

The sub-regional coopera tion would provide all facili-

ties, logistic support, political and military supremacy, socioeconomic, educational and cultural excellence, transit, trade commerce, communication and transportation mastery to New Delhi to establish its hegemony in the region.

History says that since the partition in '47 and independence of Bangladesh in '71, the dealings of New Delhi rulers with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are marked by very clever diplo-

In 1767, emperor of New Delhi Shah Alam was compelled to grant 'diwani' or the right of revenue collection of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to British East India Company.

In the backdrop of our sufferings for over last 250 years at the hands of British and Pakistani rulers and also democratically elected Indian leaders, we wonder if the concept of sub-regional grouping is the invention of modern, latest and revised version of a 'diwani' of the past?

In 1985 seven independent and sovereign countries i.e., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka unitedly formed the SAARC on objectives of peaceful co-existence, the UN Charter and policy of nonalignment, for peace, prosperity and welfare of the people of South Asia. However, many of the economic and political problems of SAARC countries could not be resolved as yet due to dilly-dally tactics of Indian leaders. In fact New Delhi was always afraid of SAARC. And now it wants to destroy it by establishing sub-regional group-

We strongly feel that instead of sub-regional grouping we may have a strong and work-

able SAARC without India, as South East Asia has an ASEAN without China. We hope the national leaders of Sri Lanka Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives and Pakistan may kindly consider the matter seriously and the USA, European Community, ASEAN, Japan and other countries may support the endeavour for the sake of peace, prosperity, democracy and political stability in South Asia and South East Asian O H Kabir Hare Street,

Chariots of anger

Wari, Dhaka-1203

Sir, For almost half a century, the three-wheel rickshaw has been Dhaka's vehicle of convenience that symbolises the city. Office-goers use it for commuting to work, ladies go to the market riding on it and the children go to school. When the city streets are flooded with water during monsoon, it is the form of transport readily available. The rickshawpullers nearly all of whom are from the countryside need immense stamina to survive the heat, dust, pollution and long hours to earn more than the average unskilled workers.

Although it is a pollutionfree mode of transport, the rickshaw is also very slowmoving and the sheer numbers are an important cause of traffic congestion. With the worsening traffic situation, the rickshaw-pullers also have their anger running high. Hardly a day passes without the undignified sight and sound of a rick shaw-puller engaged in abusive quarrel with others.

Dr Rumy Tabrez Hyder 222-Ka, Malibagh Dhaka-1217

OPINION

Reservation for Women

Farah Kabir

In the decade, much work has been done for empowering women. A woman's empowerment begins with the consciousness and perceptions about herself and her rights, capabilities and her potentials, awareness of how gender and socio-cultural, economic and political forces affect her.

To be empowered is to be aware, visible, decisive and ef fective as a change agent. The key element here is to be effective. Empowerment in the polit ical sphere would imply power to influence and affect decisions and their implementation.

Political space all over the world as in Bangladesh is monopolised by men though women constitute 50 per cent of the voters. In the present Parliament, we have 8 per cent women representation. Yet it is gradually being recognised that the participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels will be a step towards restructuring unequal structures and bring about gender equity and distributive justice.

The gender inequity in society persists even today due to the lack of recognition of women as equal political constituency and unequal distribution as well as control of resources. Despite the significant contribution to, and many instances of providing leadership in issues of political importance, women's position has remained structurally power less. They are marginally represented in formal political structures and at all levels of decision-making.

While the low participation can be attributed to patriarchal social norms and male-dominated political structure, the decline in the participation is mainly due to politicisation of politics and to increasing crim-

inalisation of politics as well. The provision of reservation of 30 seats for women in the Parliament will end in the year 2000 unless renewed. We would like to propose the renewal of reservation or quota for women until such time that a gender equity is achieved in the Parliament.

We would like to propose that the reservation is changed and increased so that for every three male seats there be one woman seat, i.e., 3:1. In the event seats are increased or decreased in future, then the seats for women will increase or decrease in the proportion of 3:1.

The method of election for women's reserved seats, however, needs to be changed to direct election instead of women parliamentarians being elected by the electoral college. It would impact not only the quality of representation and increase the

accountability of women parliamentarians, it would no longer be used as power balance for the women to be elected would depend on the electorate and not the major political party in Parliament.

We would also like to propose that the legislators seriously consider the introduction of reservation of a certain percentage of nomination of candidature by political parties for women with an amendment to the Constitution. At present, 30 per cent reservation of nomination for women is recommended. If our political parties believe and want to achieve gender equity, there is no better way than reserving nomination for women which would make it mandatory for political parties to nominate women and they would work to encourage women to participate in electoral politics.