The Final Report of the Select Committee of Parliament to Identify Appropriate Reforms of the Election Laws and the Electoral System and to Recommend Necessary Amendments presented to Parliament

Date : 25-06-2022

The Final Report of the Select Committee of Parliament to Identify Appropriate Reforms of the Election Laws and the Electoral System and to Recommend Necessary Amendments was tabled in Parliament on 22nd June by its Chairman, the Minister of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government and Leader of the House of Parliament, Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena.

This Committee, which met for the first time on May 17th, 2021, received over 160 representations from non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, women's groups, representatives of various cultural and ethnic groups, and the general public in response to a press release issued to the public and representatives of interested organizations on electoral reform, requesting for their submission of representation respecting the right to freedom of expression.

Furthermore, 69 recognized political parties were requested for their representations and 36 recognized political parties had submitted their written and oral representations to the Committee. This included political parties represented in Parliament as well.

The Committee then tabled the final report of the Committee, considering all the oral and written representations made by recognized political parties, the general public and interested organizations, women's organizations and electronic media institutions during the 29 meetings of the Committee held.

While presenting the report, Chairman of the Committee Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena, explained the observations and recommendations contained therein.

Accordingly; he pointed out that the following recommendations are included in the report.

- Amending the existing laws pertaining to the Provincial Council Elections or formulate new rules and regulations or holding it under the previous election system.
- Various parties have suggested the need for a mixed election system and this report also highlights the need for a mixed system.
- Removal of overhang seats in local government elections.
- Ensuring youth representation in addition to women's representation.
- That the duties, responsibilities and obligations of the media during the election period should be taken into consideration in keeping with the submissions made to the Committee by the Elections Commission.
- Regarding the registration of political parties, although more than 70 political parties have been registered, various issues have arisen regarding the allocation of local and other recognized political parties to contest the Parliamentary elections and other elections.
- That it must be fair about the shortcomings of many candidates in conducting political propaganda activities through electronic media.

- That the election process has become a costly election system full of corruption. The violation of election laws is due to the fact that today's elections have been transformed into an affair of unlimited expenditure, thus legislation to control election expenses, adopting a code of conduct and preventing the misuse of state resources in the election campaigning are also recommended in the report.

Accordingly, this final report contains 25 observations and 15 recommendations.

Recommendations on election systems have been made including local government, provincial council and parliamentary elections, as well as recommendations on increasing women's representation. Recommendations also have been made for the introduction of legal provisions to make it compulsory to allocate a 25% quota for youth representation in the nomination lists for local government elections and provincial council elections under youth representation.

The final report includes the recommendations regarding the recognition of political parties on the basis of voter recognition. The recommendations also have been made under the category ‘Media’ on media guidelines, conducting political propaganda activities through electronic media, violation of election laws on social media platforms, misinterpretation of information and dissemination of false information.

This report also includes recommendations on election campaigning, the right to vote, the nomination process, the electoral process, the Election Tribunal, delegation of powers of the Local Government Institutions and the Provincial Councils to the Commissioner / Secretary and the Provincial Secretary until the election is over, the failure to approve the annual budget by a local government Authority, restrictions on field officers to contest local government elections, national list and delimitation.

The final report of the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) of Parliament to Identify Appropriate Reforms of the Election Laws and the Electoral System and to Recommend Necessary Amendments is attached with this press release.