

# PAFFREL hands over proposal

**BY NABIYA VAFFOOR**

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The People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) handed over a proposal to the Committee of Experts appointed for public consultation on a new Constitution, on 30 December.

"All citizens who have turned 18 should be eligible to vote and a mechanism should be set up to include them without any delay in the Electoral Register; the Election Commission (EC) should be given the discretion to decide the date of the election day; and the focus should be on holding major elections on the same day," some of the proposals by PAFFREL stated.

PAFFREL Executive Director, Rohana Hettiarachchi, further emphasised that the educational qualification of a candidate in a Parliamentary Election should be the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examination or another similar educational qualification.

"A person who has been convicted of any offence punishable by imprisonment for a term not less than two years and who has been imprisoned for less than six months or has been convicted or is convicted of a similar offence after an election should be disqualified from being elected to public bodies and the seat should be abolished," added Hettiarachchi.

Hettiarachchi emphasised that they propose that candidates should be disqualified from contesting or being elected or nominated for any public agency if the candidate obtains dual citizenship.

"Declarations of assets and liabilities should be submitted to the EC at the time of nomination. If not, the candidature/seat should be annulled at any time when incorrect information is found to be included in the declaration of assets and liabilities. This information should become a public document. A mechanism must be set up to annually inspect the asset and liability statements submitted by public representatives," he added.

Meanwhile, PAFFREL proposed that the national list should consist only of the persons listed in that list and that no defeated candidates or other persons should be appointed from the national list for any reason.

"The existing Local Government (LG) electoral system needs to be reviewed. The Constitution should ensure a certain percentage of the increase in the representation of women in all public institutions. A system of appointments that protects the independence of the EC and all the powers to hold free and fair elections should be given to the EC."

Speaking at a media briefing on 30 December, Hettiarachchi said that elections for LG bodies should be held for the whole country at once, except in special cases, and the power of the President to extend the term of LG bodies which have expired should be revoked, but in a special case specified in the Constitution, that power should remain with the EC.