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Features

The Senate Days of Ceylon

A lone first formal session of the Seventh Parliament was held on Thursday.

The Senate building in Colombo Fort

The Senate was inaugurated on Thursday, 76 years after the second last session was held in 1934.

The building in Colombo Fort now houses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Hambantota (UPFA), Rary Senarathana (UPFA), Upeksha Swarnimedha Gunaratne (UPFA), Dayananda Fernando (UPFA), Thilaka Wijesekera (UPFA), Wimalaje Wijemansinghe – Jaffna (UPFA) and Siriyah Wijesinghe – Diggamadulla (UPFA), two Sri Lankan women who have the highest literacy rates in South Asia, but their participation in national and local legislative bodies in the region has been significantly low, according to recent statistical surveys.

Bangladesh reserves 19% of the total seats for women in Parliament while Pakistan and Nepal reserves 25% and 33% of the total seats, respectively.

Going a step further, India recently passed a quota system also known as the Panchayati system which reserves one-third of seats for women.

Sir Lanka produced the world’s first woman Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo R. Bandaranaike. Later, her daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga created history by being elected the country’s first woman President in 1994.

In 2000, Sri Lanka joined with 191 other countries to sign the Millennium Development Goals which pledges to uplift and protect gender equality in all spheres of life.

The Senate building in Colombo fort

The Senate was inaugurated in 1934 prior to the adaptation of the new Constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972.

The Senate building in Colombo Fort now houses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The model for the Senate’s role was the House of Lords in the United Kingdom.

The seat of office of a Senator was for six years except in the first Senate when the period was shorter for some of the members.

The Senate was abolished in 1972 prior to the adaptation of the new Constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972.

The Senate building in Colombo Fort now houses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Senate was intended to act as a revising chamber, discussing and amending bills, which had been passed by the House of Representatives.

The Senate featured 20 members of the Senate’s role was the House of Lords in the United Kingdom.

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