Since justice has not been served for the disabled community in Sri Lanka, we will stand up for their rights in the future - says the Chairman of the Parliamentary Caucus for Persons with Disabilities Dallas Alahapperuma in a special press conference

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- **A special tactile ballot paper for the visually impaired community at each polling station in the next national election - Commissioner General of Elections**
- **A proposal to the parliament to use buses suitable for the disabled community and initiate a pilot project with the funds allocated in this year's budget**
- **As there are no facilities in the country for access to public places as well as public transport, there is a great injustice to the disabled community - Disabled Organizations Joint Front points out**

The chairperson of the Parliamentary Caucus for Persons with Disabilities, Hon. Dallas Alahapperuma said in a press conference that as the justice has not been served for the disabled community in Sri Lanka so far, so we will stand for them regardless of party politics.

This press conference was organized at Water Edge Hotel premises in Battaramulla on 01.12.2023 in line with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, falls on December 03, 2023, and the press conference was attended by Members of Parliament, Disabled Organizations Joint Front, Commissioner General of Elections, Election Monitoring Organizations and Civil Organizations.

According to the request made by several parties including the Disability Organizations Joint Front, the members of all parties of the Parliament established this caucus last September irrespective of political differences, the Chairman said. He also assured that the caucus will stand up for the rights of the disabled people inside and outside the Parliament.

Hon. Alahapperuma further said that since there is a proposal to buy 600 buses in this year's budget, it will be proposed in Parliament on the 4th December to buy a few buses for the disabled as a pilot project. The chairman also expressed his gratitude to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for bringing this proposal.

The chairman of the caucus pointed out that although Sri Lanka signed the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, we are far behind compared to developed countries. Thus, Hon. Dallas Alahapperuma said that it is the intention of his caucus to create coordination between the disabled community and policy makers by appearing collectively in policy making.

He also pointed out that since the needs of the disabled community are linked with various government institutions, departments, etc., the aim of this new caucus is to stand for them and become their voice by coordinating all together.

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Speaking at the event, Commissioner General of Elections Mr. Saman Ratnayake, said that in the next national election, steps will be taken to provide a special 'Tactile ballot paper' to each polling station for the visually impaired community. He said that the piolet project with regard to this was successful in 10 polling stations in Nuwara Eliya district. He said that special attention will be given to the needs of the hearing-impaired community and the accessibility of the disabled community in the polling stations. Mr. Ratnayake also said that steps will be taken to provide an ID card to the disabled community.

Mrs. Rasanjali Pathirage, President of Disability Organizations Joint Front (DOJF), who spoke at the event, said that 8.7% of the country's population, nearly 16 lakh people, belong to the disabled community. She also said that it was a great achievement to establish a parliamentary caucus on behalf of their voices on September 6. She also pointed out that people with disabilities in this country do not have access to public transport including buses and trains, as there are no facilities in many public places in this country. She also drew attention to the fact that people with disabilities are being badly abused and the obstacles to education.

Therefore, she emphasized the need to draft a new law that legally enforces the rights of people with disabilities and pointed out that people with disabilities should also be represented in politics. She also said that the chairman of the caucus Hon. Dullas Alahapperuma is highly commendable for his contribution to the disabled community as a very sensitive leader.

The media's responsibility to create a good society that respects the rights of people with disabilities was also emphasized here.

Also, Brian Kingston, a visually impaired student who has passed the G.C.E Ordinary Level examination with flying colours and currently studying advanced in biology stream at Ananda College, Colombo, addressed the press conference and expressed issues related to his community.

Member of Parliament Hon. Premnath Dolawatta, who participated in this event, presented his visiting card prepared with Braille facility to the chairman of the caucus and student Brian Kingston.

The Chairperson of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus, Hon. Dr. Sudarshini Fernandopulle, its Co-Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Rohini Kumari Wijeratne, Members of Parliament Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, Hon. K.P.S Kumarasiri, Hon. Udayana kirindigoda Mr. Rohana Hettiarachchi, Director of PAFFEREL, Mrs. Shyama Salgadu, Director of NDI were also present on this occasion.

The event was organized with the financial support of USAID and the support of NDI.

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