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'Women need to organise as a pressure group'

New Delhi, May 10 (IANS) There is a need for women to organise themselves as a pressure group to be able to carve a niche in the political sphere, three Delhi-based women journalists said Saturday. Speaking at a panel discussion organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organisation (FLO), Navika Kumar of Times Now, Nistula Hebbar of the Economic Times, and Smita Sharma of Network 18 said that participation of women was dismal in legislatures as they had not been able to stress the need to be heard.

According to FLO, the panel discussion on 'women and politics: elections today and tomorrow' was organised to shed light on why women have been left behind in the political arena both as leaders and voters when they have excelled in private and public sectors in the last few decades.

Kumar said that while women comprised 49 percent of the voting population, there are only 11.6 percent women parliamentarians in the country.

Hebbar underlined that women who enter politics must be ready to face the adversities as they will have to fight for creating a space in the male-dominated sphere.

Sharma added that there was a need to engage with women at the lowest levels and bring about political awareness among them, so that they form their own opinions and actively participate in politics.

Senior business journalist and discussion moderator Ashutosh Sinha said that cultural attitudes, the difficulties in raising sufficient campaign funds and inadequate support from political parties were some of the challenges that needed to be addressed to create an enabling environment for active women participation in politics.

The panel discussion concluded that political parties must become more sensitive towards women and should reserve 33 percent for women in organisational posts or give them party tickets.

In her address, FLO's president Neeta Boochra highlighted the grim numbers of women participation in politics and that only 11.6 percent women are parliamentarians in the country.