



# BUSINESS DIGEST

Vol No 11

Issue No 2

May 2014



## Politics: Where are the women?

*L to R: Smita Sharma, Associate Editor Foreign Affairs, Network 18; Navika Kumar, Political Economy Editor, Times Now; Neeta Boochra, President, FLO; Ashutosh Sinha, Senior Business Journalist; Nistula Hebbar, Senior Assistant Editor, The Economic Times and Dr. Manju Prakash Kalra, Executive Director, FLO and Assistant Secretary General, FICCI.*

Historically, women have been outsiders in politics. A sneak peek into the history reveals only a handful of women rulers worldwide. Even today, women continue to be largely under-represented as corporate and political leaders, as voters and elected officials despite representing 50 per cent of the world's population.

Women did not have the right to vote until the 20th century, leave alone right to contest elections. Almost a century later, that right is almost universal, yet it is not enough.

Often women voters' choices are influenced by the men of the family. Women who contest elections and make it to the Parliament, are often offered portfolios of welfare, social

development etc. The key portfolios such as finance, commerce and defence are held my men.

The true benefits of democracy can be reaped only when women are fairly represented in the political landscape of countries. In fact, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is one of the key indicators measuring progress on gender equality in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A report by UN Women highlighted that there are 21.8 per cent women Members of Parliament worldwide. This is the highest figure ever achieved, and an increase of 8.7 percentage points since 2000. However, despite all the progress made, significant