Kavitha roots for women in politics

Calls for passage of women’s reservation bill in Parliament

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Member of Parliament K. Kavitha has pitched for passage of women’s reservation bill in the Parliament as a disruptive short-term solution to reduce male dominance in various sectors, including politics.

Inheritance of political lineage, which has become the cultural norm in Indian politics, needs to be countered through 33% reservation for women in legislatures, she said, while addressing a gathering of young entrepreneurs, students and professionals at Young Thinkers’ Conference-2018 organised at Indian School of Business here on Friday. The event was co-hosted by the British Deputy High Commissioner and ISB.

Despite the best efforts by a woman leader, the erstwhile government could not pass the bill, and now is the opportunity when the ruling coalition was strong in both the Houses, she said, and made an appeal for formation of an advocacy group to bring pressure on the government towards this “as men cannot be dislodged from their bastions unless something disruptive happens”.

Only 11% of MPs and 9% of MLAs in the country were women, she noted, and said that the nation needs to introspect about such low participation of women in politics.

Attributing women’s reluctance to join politics to the kind of scrutiny they are subjected to, Ms. Kavitha drew example from last year’s media reports on women State heads’ meeting, which spoke more about the colour of their attires than the meeting.

The three M’s - money, media and men - are major barriers for women in politics, she said, and suggested long-term solutions that included property in women’s name for financial security apart from education and empowerment.

The Telangana government’s initiative in making women the beneficiaries of housing and land distribution schemes was one positive step towards this, she felt.

Issues such as gender equality cannot be spoken about in isolation, but only in conjunction with other issues such as hunger, poverty and illiteracy.

Women-friendly spaces

She called for women-friendly geographical spaces, policy changes to make the administration gender-friendly, gender-based budget allocations in health and education, and enough access to finances among others.

British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming expressed concern over the widening gender gap in terms of health, economic and political empowerment across the globe, and said critical mass of women were needed in legislatures for women-friendly policy changes.

“For long, women have been patronised at best and insulted at worst. It’s time to change that,” he said.

The day-long session had women leaders from across the spectrum sharing their success stories.