

Proposing a New Mixed Electoral Method for Sri Lanka: Zone Method (Kalāpa Kramaya)

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The Zone method is a multi-member constituency method. The results provided by the method are very close to the actual parliamentary election results that are based on the district proportional representation (PR) method. Here is the summary of the method.

1. The Zone method is based on the dual-member proportional (DMP) representation method [1] and the existing district proportional representation (PR) method in Sri Lanka [2].
2. The number of parliamentary members will be retained as 225. The election commission of Sri Lanka apportions 196 parliamentary seats among electoral districts according to Article 98 of the constitution. The number of National List members will be retained as 29.
3. The method proposes new electoral zones (kalāpa) in each district. The number of zones to be established in each district depends on the number of members allocated to the district (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The number of electoral zones that must be established in each district should be about half of the number of parliament members allocated to the district.
4. Each new electoral zone is a multi-member constituency. There are dual-member zones and triple-member zones. Two representatives will represent a dual-member zone in the parliament. Three representatives will represent a triple-member zone in the parliament.
5. Based on the number of parliament members allocated among 22 electoral districts in the parliamentary election of 2020, 91 new electoral zones should be established. Out of 91 zones, there are 77 dual-member zones and 14 triple-member zones (See Table A2 in Appendix 2).
6. This is a district-based system. Each political party must prepare a single nomination list for the district in respect of all the zones in the district. The political parties should nominate two candidates for a dual-member zone and three candidates for a triple-member zone. A party can submit nominations for selected zones or all zones in the district. During the nomination period, each contesting party shall submit a list of 29 nominees for the National List. Submission of the National List is optional and any party that does not submit the National List during the nomination period will not qualify to receive any National List seats.
7. The parties should follow the minimum conditions stated in Tables 2(a) and 2(b) to maintain the women nominees above 25% and youth nominees above 20%. The minimum quota for women and youth nominees in the National List should be 50% and 20% respectively. In the current parliament, the percentage of 60+ (61 years or above) members is 25%. To maximize the opportunities for young and middle-aged nominees, the percentage of 60+ nominees should be reduced. The parties should follow the maximum conditions stated in Table 2(c) to maintain the 60+ nominees below 19% during the nomination. No more than 5 (18%) nominees on the National List should be 60+.
8. All nominees should pass three subjects at the GCE (A/L) examination in one sitting or equivalent foreign examination. This minimum educational requirement does not apply to nominees who are/were members of the parliament. All National List nominees must have at least a bachelor's degree from a recognized university or an equivalent professional qualification.
9. The election commission will release preference numbers to the candidates three days after

the final day of the nomination. The candidates who contest in a dual-member zone will receive preference numbers 1 or 2. The candidates who contest in a triple-member zone will receive preference numbers 1, 2, or 3. The National List candidates will receive preference numbers from 1 to 29.

10. Except for the preference numbers of the National List candidates, the new ballot paper looks similar to the ballot paper of previous parliamentary elections (Fig. 2).
11. The voters will cast votes for the political party and mark preference votes for its candidates. The voters are eligible to mark the maximum of two preference votes in a dual-member zone and three preference votes in a triple-member zone. The voters can mark preference votes for not more than three candidates on the National List. Marking preference votes is optional.
12. Currently, the number of same-party members fighting for the preferential votes (manapa pore) varies from 7 to 22. The Zone method limits that number to 2 in a dual-member zone and 3 in a triple-member zone. As the voters can mark preferential votes for all candidates in the same party, the fights for the preferential votes may fade away.
13. The following naming convention is used to explain this method. A dual-member zone has two seats: 1st member seat and 2nd member seat. A triple-member zone has three seats: 1st member seat, 2nd member seat and, 3rd member seat.
14. In any zone, the political party that polled the most votes receives the 1st member seat and is named the winning party of the zone. In a triple-member zone, the political party that polled the second-highest number of votes will receive the 3rd member seat, if its' votes surpass the barrier number. If not, the winning party will receive the 3rd member seat. The barrier number is 25% of the votes polled by the winning party.
15. The political party that polls the most votes in the district shall get the district bonus seat.
16. The Zone method uses the district PR allocation method given in Article 99 of the constitution but deducts a portion of the votes for winning the FPP (1st member and 3rd member) seats.
17. The 2nd member seat in a zone is received by a political party that receives the bonus seat and/or the district PR seats. The detail of the method is given in section 2.9.
18. When a political party receives a seat or multiple seats in a zone, the preference votes secured by each of the candidates nominated by the party are considered. The candidate securing the highest number of preference votes in the zone is declared elected first, the candidate securing the next highest number of preferences is declared elected next, and so on until all assigned seats are filled.
19. Twenty-nine National List seats are allocated among the political parties based on the proportions of votes they receive throughout Sri Lanka. Once a party receives its National List quota, the descending order of the preference votes should be applied to fill the National List seats. A person whose name is not on the National List is not eligible to enter the parliament until all remaining candidates on the list get a chance. If no candidate remains on the list, the party leader or the secretary can nominate a replacement.
20. When a vacancy in a zone occurs, the candidate with the next highest number of preference votes shall be elected. If no candidate remains on the zone's candidate list, the party leader or the secretary can nominate a replacement.