

# Adopt Norwegian voter registration system – PAFFREL

**BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY**

Executive Director of PAFFREL Rohana Hettiarachchi says it is high time for bureaucrats to give serious thought to the advisability of registering voters at birth.

Hettiarachchi said Sri Lanka could easily complete this process (includes systematic procedures) of registering a citizen as it is mandatory to register someone at his/her birth.

By making slight changes in the legal framework and in the administrative sector, we can save an enormous amount of money, time and manpower spent every year to update the electoral register, he said this will ensure citizens of their right to vote.

Even though a citizen of Sri Lanka is eligible to vote when he or she reaches 18 years of age, it is a must that they register themselves at the Department of Election. Also, even if the voter completes his/her 18th year on the day of the elections, that person is not lawfully eligible to cast a vote. One must register and monitor that registration. Generally, the registrations are invited in the months of June/July. The State has been able to limit the time duration of registration up to six months. More than 14,000

Grama Niladharis (Village Officers) are drawn into this process for months on end. Annually, the government allocates an amount of Rs 50 million for Village Officers (Grama Niladharis) only. But complaints are heard from citizens who had been unable to vote as a result of the name not being printed in the electoral register.

“Everyone who is born in Norway is registered in the Civil Registration List automatically upon his/her birth. With this registration when one completes his/her 18th year, they are considered as eligible to vote. So, according to this method anyone who completes the 18th year even on the day of the elections is legally entitled to cast their vote. There are no extra charges to register. If you happen to complete your 18th year on the day of an election, your official ballot paper will be sent to your house on the very same day. Another important fact about registration is that if he/she is a citizen of Norway he/she can use the Citizen Identity Card (ID) or Service ID and register themselves on the spot to cast their vote. This is practically executed even for those who are not citizens but have been living in Norway for more than three years (expatriates),” he said.