

# Vice-President for electoral reforms

SIR, ~ According to a report in your paper on 16 February, the country's Vice-President has proposed three changes in the electoral system to strengthen representative democracy. First, voting should be made compulsory. Second, the candidate who is declared the winner must secure more than 50 per cent of the votes. Third, there should be proportional representation in the legislature, representing all sections of society.

As regards the first suggestion, the voting right is essentially an option and not a compulsion to elect a candidate by default. As such there must be a provision of neutral and negative voting. In a multi-party system like ours, there may be more than two candidates for a seat. In that case, the chances of the winning candidate securing more than 50 per cent of the votes may not be possible in most seats. Re-election will, therefore, be necessary. A new form of rigging, such as forced withdrawal of nominations, cannot be ruled out.

As for the third suggestion, a separate House on the lines of the Legislative Council, which has been abolished in many states, may be reintroduced. It is an expensive proposition. Can we afford it?

At another remove, Mr M Ansari has referred to the problem of inflexibility and the working structure of our governance, saying that they impede proper implementation of sound policies and innovative ideas. Hopefully, this problem can be solved by the President, Vice-President and the Council of Ministers.