



CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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LOCAL Authorities Elections - 2018

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The Elections Commission has officially declared 10th February as the date for the Local Authorities Elections that have been postponed for several years. Local Authorities Elections held prior to the forthcoming elections, were held in three stages as below.

The first stage was held on 17 / 03 / 2011.

The second stage was held on 23 / 07 / 2011.

The third stage was held on 10 / 08 / 2011.

Of the above three stages, the first stage was held under the former Commissioner of Elections Mr. Dayananda Dissanayake. Since Mr. Dayananda Dissanayake retired after the first stage, his successor Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya took charge of the other two stages. The said election was the last Local Authorities Election held under a Commissioner of Elections and in accordance with the proportional representative (PR) System.

Although the prevailing government at the time, had decided to commence the aforementioned Local Authorities Election under a mixed system comprising of Proportional Representative System (PR system) and First Pass the Post System (FPTP system), the particular decision was revoked and hence the election was held according to the Proportional Representative (PR) System. It was during this election that the official accreditation to deploy Observers in every polling station island-wide was given to the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFRAL).

The final result of the three- stage elections recorded the United People's Freedom Alliance receiving 4,774,791 votes and taking control of in 271 out of 322 local authorities. See grid below:

Name of the party /Independent group	Urban Council	Municipal Council	Pradeshiya Sabha	Total
United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA)	17	29	225	271
Ilankai Tamil Arusu Kachchi (ITAK)	-	5	25	30
United National Party (UNP)	2	5	3	10
Sri Lanka Muslim Congress	1	-	4	5
National Congress	1	-	1	2
Tamil United Liberation Front	-	-	2	2
Kandurata Janatha Peramuna (Kandurata People's Front)	-	-	1	1
Independent Group	-	-	1	1
Total	21	39	262	322

Although the official term of a local authority is typically four years, the upcoming election was declared long after terms of office of local authorities expired. There were numerous reasons for the delay. The primary reason was the delimitation process that had to be undertaken as per the newly introduced mix member proportional system of elections and the political dynamics at play. CMEV has expressed its concerns over the postponement of elections to the Election Commission established as per the 19th Constitutional Amendment and to the public at large. We are of the view that notwithstanding the powers granted to the Election Commission under the 19th Amendment, the postponement of elections was largely due to the political dynamics at play as seen by the political parties, rather than any lapse on the part of the Commission. CMEV notes that the relevant line ministry has to issue the gazette indicating the number of members to be elected from all constituencies and that Parliament has to approve the gazette. CMEV calls for the authority to schedule elections on time to be granted to the Election Commission.

The upcoming Local Authorities Election is significant because it will be the first to be conducted under the Elections Commission as well as under new system of election. Of considerable importance too is the quota for female representation that seeks to rectify the regionally and internationally low representation of women in legislative bodies in Sri Lanka.

The total cost incurred by the Elections Commission to conduct the elections in which over 56,000 candidates will contest in 341 local authorities consisting of more than 13,000 polling stations, amounts to 3500 million LKRS. Under the new electoral system 60% of the

candidates are returned through First Past the Post (FPTP) and 40% returned through PR. The overall result though, will be proportional to the total number of votes obtained. . Accordingly, a minimum of 8356 members are expected to be elected to 341 local authorities

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), has initiated its election observation process throughout the period of local authorities election. The observation process consists of field monitors deployed as long-term observers covering all 25 administrative districts and a large number of static observers to be stationed in the polling stations on the day of elections. In addition, on polling day mobile monitors will be deployed around the country .

CMEV will continue to work with the Commission of Elections and civil society organizations to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process. The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence has also undertaken baseline surveys and gathered data on campaign finance and the use of polythene for campaigns. CMEV will make full use of the mainstream and social media in its contribution towards the electorate making an informed choice.