

## **The political parties should practice the use of campaign financing procedure effectively**

Today we are discussing a theme which has an immense timely significance. The democratic society gives an immense emphasis to the control of campaign finance specially. The fact that the election expenses should be regulated in the context of commercialization of the whole world. The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence and PAFFREL have collaboratively launched a wide discussion on the matter, and that is a satisfactory situation. The commitment done by the civil organizations to strengthen the election mechanism of the country can never be underestimated. I would like to tell you about this sort of a program carried out recently by the above mentioned two organizations with the headship of the Election Commission. There, even though a law has not yet been established in the country to regulate election expenses, the representatives of the political parties unanimously agreed that the candidates should inform about their expenses at the forthcoming Local Government Election to the Election Commission. Even though there is no such law, we have already initiated actions for that.

I think this is a good initiative. The expenses are limitless. That means the election campaigns have become highly corrupted propaganda with the economic transformation that took place in the social context in 1977. Nevertheless, all the political parties give weight to the democracy. All the political parties give emphasis to free and fair elections. If the political parties really want to ensure free and fair election, and at the same time, if they want to establish democracy, the parties will definitely have to agree to the regulations on limiting the expenses of the political parties.

What is happening so far is similar to what was practiced during the times of Election Department. That is the commission summons the relevant election expenses annually. The accounting reports are not subjected to proper inspection either. Hence, I would like to request from the chairman to establish a separate unit in the Election Commission to investigate those reports. Only such an attempt would result in the transparency in the country.

The next fact is, how compliable the mechanisms used in other countries are to our country to limit election expenses. Countries like India and Bangladesh have achieved a considerable success in this. As I have been working as a member of a political party over a long time, I have an understanding about the transparency required for a political party. Hence, we should create a win win situation for both the parties.

There is no feasibility for elections without money. But the voter has a right to know where the money is coming from. There are no doubts about that. A successful initiative will be to start a program to document the past election expenses. Those days, we remember that there was a practice where the Secretary of the winning party sent a report of expenses to the Election Officer. They practiced that with much keenness and with much obligation to the law. Since this is an important tradition and a rule that already prevailed in the country in the past, it is not very difficult for the political parties to adapt into this again.

This is an adaptation of the speech done by Champani Padmasekara, Atterney at Law, senior member of the standing committee of the representatives of political parties in the Election Commission, central committee member of Sri Lanka Freedom Party, at the program organized by the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence for Election Financing, on 31 December 2016, in Colombo.