



# CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

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April 17, 2020

Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairperson, Mr. Nalin Abeysekera PC, Commissioner, and Prof. Rathnajeewan H. Hoole, Commissioner, Election Commission of Sri Lanka, Election Secretariat, Rajagiriya.

Dear Mr. Chairperson and Commissioners of the Election Commission,

## Use of official voter registration lists without Election Commission approval

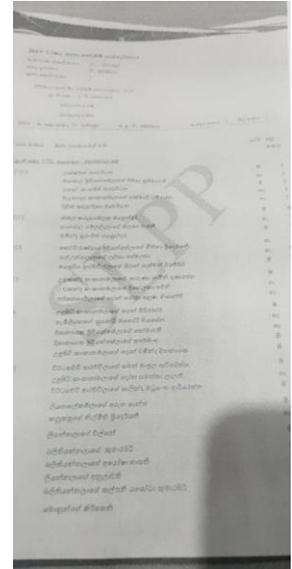
As you are aware, a number of social relief programmes are being conducted by the government across the country in response to COVID-19 pandemic situation. CMEV is writing to your Commission to raise your attention about serious election law violations taking place regarding the implementation of these programmes.

One of the components of the series of relief programmes is the provision of a Rs. 5,000 allowance for Samurdhi beneficiaries who are on waiting lists. The Director-General of Department of Samurdhi Development sent circular DSD/HO/5 ME/GH/01 dated April 01, 2020 alongside a letter dated April 12, 2020 to all District Secretaries requesting them to hand over the 2019 voter registration lists to Samurdhi Bank Societies and Samurdhi Community Base Banks for the purpose of identifying beneficiaries and preventing the potential double-counting of beneficiaries. We have no knowledge of any decision the Election Commission has taken regarding this administrative action but trust that you would have responded appropriately.

Reports and information we received so far confirm that Samurdhi rural banks and Samurdhi officers are using those voter registration lists in many areas of the country for purposes other than the social relief programmes. We were shocked to observe that even Grama Niladharies have also temporarily stepped-down from engaging in the process of selecting beneficiaries and that different political parties are accessing the voter registration lists.

Upon making in-depth enquiries, CMEV can confirm that there was a meeting at the Head Office of the Department of Samurdhi Development under the leadership of its Director-General in which copies of voter registration lists had been distributed among attending officials representing the Samurdhi Department. These Samurdhi officials then shared the copies of voter registration lists with the managers of Samurdhi banks and other Samurdhi officers in different locations. Copies of those lists along with the complaints sent to CMEV have been annexed to this letter.

When comparing the copies of voter lists, it is obvious that they have been printed/photocopied in bulk by the Department of Samurdhi Development with the knowledge and the guidance of the Director-General of Samurdhi Development Programme. Each distributed voter registration list also carries “SLPP”, the abbreviation of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna. Only the Election Commission is authorised to distribute voter lists inclusive of party names for election campaigning purposes. Thus, the copying and distribution of these official documents the Election Commission provides to political parties is illegal and unacceptable.



CMEV therefore seeks responses to the following enquiries from your Commission:

1. What approval has the Election Commission granted for the certain documents it has provided to political parties being used for prohibited acts? What action will the Election Commission take against public officials, public departments and political parties engaging in these activities?
2. Mr. R.P.B. Thilakasiri, the Director-General of the Department of Samurdhi Development, is a clearly identifiable public official who has committed a grave violation of election laws by enabling the use of state property and state mechanisms to use official Election Commission documents for prohibited purposes, and issuing instruction for such verbally without an officially authorised or signed document. What action will the Election Commission take against this public official?

It is our opinion that, any action your Commission would take now to rectify the misuse of property belonging to your Commission would set a strong precedent to prevent such violations in future. We expect that your Commission will pay immediate due attention to this matter.

Thank you,

Manjula Gajanayaka,  
National Coordinator, CMEV

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Copied to:

- Mr. Saman Sri Rathnayake, Commissioner General, Election Secretariat, Election Commission of Sri Lanka, Rajagiriya.
- Mr. Suranga Ranasinghe, Assistant Election Commissioner, Election Secretariat, Election Commission of Sri Lanka, Rajagiriya.