

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

මැතිවරණ ප්‍රචණ්ඩතාව නිරීක්ෂණ මධ්‍යස්ථානය
தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

24/2, 28th Lane, Off Flower Road, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 11 2564404, +94 11 5621886, +94 11 5621904 Fax: +94 11 4722632
E-mail: cmev@cpalanka.org Website: <http://cmev.wordpress.com>

North Central and Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council Elections

13th August 2008 - Media Communiqué No 01

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence [CMEV] has commenced its monitoring of the Provincial Council Elections in the North Central and Sabaragamuwa Provinces. CMEV has deployed 27 field monitors in the 27 polling divisions of the two provinces and informed political parties, election officials, police and the civil society of their presence. All reports of election related violence and malpractice will be sent to the CMEV Secretariat in Colombo for further corroboration before public release.

A total of 101 incidents have been recorded by CMEV since the close of nominations on the 4th July 2008 up to 11th August 2008. Of these 54 have been classified as major incidents and the remaining 47 as minor incidents. The highest number of major incidents was recorded in the Anuradhapura District [19] followed by Ratnapura [13], Kegalle [09] and Polonnaruwa [13] respectively. Of the minor incidents logged by CMEV, Anuradhapura leads district-wise [19]. Apart from two attempted murders in the Ratnapura and Anuradhapura districts, the highest number of major incidents in terms of assault and robbery were also recorded in Anuradhapura district. This clearly indicates that in terms of overall incidents of election related violence it is the most tense of the four districts.

Of the incidents recorded so far, 52 complaints are against UPFA, 21 complaints are against UNP and 3 complaints are against JVP. In 24 complaints the party affiliation of the alleged perpetrators was not identified. The highest number of complaints was reported so far by JVP [37], followed by UNP [29] and UPFA [28]. Of the number of complaints by the JVP, 25 were against the UPFA and only 2 complaints against the UNP.

CMEV notes that the level of violence across the campaign has steadily increased as the election draws nearer. Pre-election violence recorded by CMEV since the close of nominations on 4th July is as follows:

Postal Votes

A postal vote of upcoming elections was held on 7th and 8th August 2008 at 941 polling centres in both provinces, of which CMEV monitors observed 136 polling centres.

Apart from two major incidents reported in Kuruwita and Aralaganwila, CMEV notes that the postal vote was held in a free and fair manner in the polling divisions it monitored.

However, there were two major incidents reported from Kuruwita of Ratnapura District and from Aralaganwila of Polonnaruwa district. In Kuruwita Police Station, 29 Police officers were not given the opportunity to cast their postal votes. They had not received ballot papers on time. When CMEV contacted the RO of the Ratnapura District he said that this was on account of a technical error. He went on to note that their right to vote could be met only through the allocation of their duty stations closer to their respective polling booths. The postal vote of the Agrarian Centre in Aralaganwila, Polonnaruwa was held before the scheduled date. The RO Polonnaruwa in an interview with CMEV stated that the Primary investigation related to the incident was already complete and the report had been submitted to the Commissioner of Elections. Final action would be taken in accordance with the Commissioner's decision.

Misuse of Public Property and Power

There is an increasing trend to misuse Public Property and resources during the election campaign. State owned buildings, telephones and vehicles are presently utilized for the election campaign. CMEV election monitors note that the election campaigns of former Chief Ministers are especially culpable in this regard.

Mr. Berty Premalal Dissanayake, former Chief Minister and a candidate for the office of Chief Minister in the North-Central Province flagrantly misuses all the facilities and State property (Provincial Council office, office related resources and 8 government vehicles) he had access to when he held office as part of his election campaign for re-election.

Details of misusing items are as follows:

Office: Chief Ministers Office, Harischandra Mw. [Dharmapala Mw.], Anuradhapura

Telephone/s: 025 - 2222409, 025 - 22224855, 025 - 2222045

Vehicles: [NCP KB - 2682], [NCP KB - 5339], [64 - 7666], [54 - 7305], [53 - 9380], [32 - 6503], [65 - 6413] and [58 - 8333]

CMEV field monitors reported an incident related to the unethical conduct of former Chief Minister of the Sabaragamuwa Province vying for re-election, Mr. Maheepala CMEV - 13th August 2008 - Media Communiqué No 01

Herath. According to the CMEV field monitors records, interviews for new admissions for a training course on jewellery production at the Gem and Jewellery Research and Training Institute was held on 5th August at Mr. Herath's private residence ("Rathnagiri", Kegalle) with Mr. W. M. W. Abeyrathne Bandara, a working Director of the Institute. Tellingly, an advertisement in the *Lankadeepa* newspaper on 4th August noted that the deadline for applications fell on 8th August. The Director used a double-cab bearing the registration number HP-4219 belonging to the Institute to visit Mr. Herath's residence to conduct these "interviews".

North Central Province

The highest election related malpractices [65%] of NCP were recorded from the Anuradhapura District. Within the Anuradhapura District, 23 incidents were recorded from Kalaweva electorate, constituting 60% of recorded incidents. There were 4 cases of assault, 1 case of hurt, 1 incident of regarding the misuse of State property, 4 related to robbery, 3 related to mischief and 11 on damage to property. The Polonnaruwa electorate recorded the highest number of incidents [65%] from the Polonnaruwa District. Incidents included 1 assault, 2 related to robbery, 1 related to mischief, 3 incidents of threatening behaviour and 2 regarding damage to property.

Sabaragamuwa Province

The highest number of incidents [53%] was recorded in the Ratnapura District. Of these incidents 7 were from the Kolonna electorate, 5 were from the Rakwana electorate and 3 were from the Pelmadulla electorate. To date, 20 incidents were recorded from the Kegalle District. 10 incidents were from the Kegalle electorate, 4 from Rambukkana, 3 from Mawanella electorate and 1 from Aranayake, Deraniyagala and Dedigama respectively.

On account of the grave nature of the offences, incidents that occurred up to the 10th of August 2008 are highlighted below.

Attempted Murder

The attempted murder on 9th August of Mr. Lalith hettiarachchi (an active member of the JVP) recorded from the Elheliyagoda electorate in the Ratnapura District was a key incident. He is presently recovering from a gunshot wound in Ward 72 at the National Hospital in Colombo. Mr. Chameera Koswatte (Chief Ministerial candidate of JVP for the Sabaragamuwa Province) stated in an interview conducted by CMEV that "the main purpose of this incident was politically motivated". However when CMEV asked Avissawella Police to comment on this incident, they were of the firm opinion that it was

not politically motivated. Inspector of Police K. Upali Tillekaratne issued a statement that “this was perpetrated by a gang habitually involved in crimes related to “House Breaking by Night.” When CMEV spoke to the wife of the victim, Mrs. Singakkarage Siriyalatha, she too reiterated the attack on her husband was politically motivated.

The other incident was reported from the Anuradhapura – East electorate on 9th August. A supporter of the United National Party (UNP) Chief Minister Candidate Major General Janaka Perera was hospitalized with serious gunshot injuries from an unknown gang. The gang had shot at the vehicle [57 – 9757] the victim was travelling with other supporters. The firing took place around 2am close to the “Mahajana Pola”. Mr. Nuwan Sampath Jayasinghe was admitted to the Anuradhapura Base Hospital. Media coordinator Major Dayarathne had directed the driver of vehicle to CMEV spokesmen. According to the driver, two vehicles were engaged in the attack - a cab and a Land Rover Defender. No further details of the vehicles were noted. The owner of the vehicle, Mr. Kapila Muthugala also was in the vehicle. When CMEV contacted Mr. Muthugala, he mentioned and confirmed the driver’s statement and further noted that both vehicles were green, but could not identify registration number and the persons who were in them.

When CMEV contacted a spokesman of the Anuradhapura hospital, he said that the victim, Sampath Jayasinghe (18), had undergone surgery on 9th August and discharged on 11th August. Major Gen. Janaka Perera lodged a complaint to the Anuradhapura police station on 9th August 2008 under EIB 191/62. When CMEV contacted Crime branch of the Police Headquarters in Anuradhapura, Police Sergeant Mr. Jayaweera confirmed the lodging of this complaint and said that investigations were in progress.

Hurt

The most notable incident in this category was recorded from the Polonnaruwa electorate in the Polonnaruwa District in relation to a clash between two UPFA groups on the 7th of August near the 5th milepost of Medagama, Aralaganwila. As a result of this clash, Mr. R.M. Punchibanda Ratnayake (former Provincial Council member and UPFA candidate for the upcoming election) suffered grievous hurt on his left arm. He is presently hospitalised in Ward 10 at the Government Hospital in Polonnaruwa.

In the interview conducted by CMEV, Mr. Ratnayake alleged that supporters of Mr. Saranelis Dayawanse (UPFA candidate) were the perpetrators of this incident. When CMEV contacted Mr. Dayawanse, he conceded that there was a clash between the two groups.

Aralaganwila Police also stated that the two parties had settled their differences.

Use of Firearms

During the pre-election period CMEV election monitors observe that incidents involving the use of firearms are steadily increasing. 6% of incident logged by CMEV to date involved the use of firearms.

CMEV was formed in 1997 by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), the Free Media Movement (FMM) and the Coalition Against Political Violence as an independent and non-partisan organisation to monitor the incidence of election related violence. Currently, CMEV is made up of CPA, FMM and INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre.

CONTACT INFORMATION

| Location | Telephone Numbers | Fax Numbers |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Colombo Office | 011 2 564404 | 011 4 722632 |



DR. PAIKIASOTHY SARAVANAMUTTU
CO – CONVENOR.



MR. UDAYA KALUPATHIRANA
CO – CONVENOR



MR. UVINDU. KURUKULASURIYA
CO – CONVENOR.