

Report on PAFFREL Meeting with the Election Commissioner on 18th Thursday at the Election Department.

Election Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake expressed his willingness to consider the request made by PAFFREL as an Election Monitoring organization, to observe the counting process at the forth coming elections. This was indicated when PAFFREL's Executive Director Rohana Hettiarachchi expressed that there had been widespread rumors of dishonest practices that had taken place in the Counting Centers and although no evidence had been provided in the election petition submitted to the Supreme Court in this regard, however there still remains doubt among certain sections of the general public regarding this matter.

Other issues taken up at the meeting included,

1. Failure to provide transportation to IDPs: The Election Commissioner said that there was a shortage of buses, and in the morning some of the buses that were to be deployed to transport IDPs were taken for other official use. More over those people who had not registered to vote took the opportunity of the free transportation provided, there by disrupting the smooth transportation of voters to the polling stations.
2. Registering of IDPs and Voter Education: PAFFREL as the monitoring watch requested the Election Commissioner to educate the voters in the IDP camps. He agreed and gave approval to undertake such work.
3. Issuance of Temporary Identity cards: The Election Commissioner said that this process would be ongoing, and those without identity documents could apply for temporary IDs through Grama Niladharies.
4. Abuse of Media: The Election Commissioner said that civil society groups have a role to play in pressuring the media to be fair in its propagation of news relating to the election campaign.
5. Abuse of State resources: The Election Commissioner said specific details of such abuses need to be provided so that action could be taken. But even where such information was provided, the wrongdoers either camouflaged their deeds, or in the case of misuse of state vehicles, simply drove off to another location.
6. Pre-recording of Final Election Result the Election Commissioner denied that the version put out by the media was doctored by the government. He said that he did not give a live broadcast as this would have excluded some representatives of broad cast channels, as not all of them could be accommodated in his office.

Therefore he had pre-recorded the statement in the presence of all the media, both state and private. Subsequently they had severally broadcast it, after editing.

7. Computer manipulation of final count The Election Commissioner said that the computer count was done by the University of Colombo, and in any event, there was also a manual count that was done, and he was satisfied that the two counts were in harmony.
8. Imprisonment during counting stage: The Election Commissioner denied that he or his family was held under any form of arrest, and said that several opposition politicians and their election agents had seen him in his office room and this was mentioned while delivering the final results.
9. PAFFREL Requested the Election Commissioner to establish separate units at the Election Department to receive complaints under his direct supervision, and requested to recruit senior officers of the relevant areas to investigate, and for follow up each and every complain, and report to the Commissioner. (for e.g. misuse of Government resources and abuse of official status , Media misuse , Transfers , Complaints against government officials, Police etc.)

Participant Were

- Dr.Jehan Perera – General Secretary
- Dr.Padma Rathnayake – Director
- Mr.Rohana Hettiarachchi – Executive Director
- Mr.Hirantha Iddamalgoda – National Coordinator