

PAFFREL

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சுதந்திரமானதும் நியாயமானதுமான தேர்தல்களுக்கான மக்கள் செயற்பாடு.

PEOPLE'S ACTION FOR FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

Election Day Communique

Local Authorities Election 2025

May 06, 2025

The Local Authorities Election 2025 took place on May 06, 2025 for 339 local authorities (28 Municipal Councils, 36 Urban Councils, and 275 Pradeshiya Sabhas) across the country, marking the first election of its kind in seven years and also the first Local Authorities Election under the new government. A total of 17,156,338 persons were eligible to cast their vote through 13,759 polling stations. 75,589 of candidates from both political parties and independent groups contested in the election. However, the voter turnout was not very high, remaining between 55-60%.

The election was successfully conducted in a peaceful and orderly environment, under the direction of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (ECSL), with few exceptions which are localized and by candidates and supported by various political parties and independent groups. The Commission, in collaboration with key stakeholders—including accredited election observation organizations—ensured that the electoral process was transparent, inclusive, and in full compliance with democratic principles. From the pre-election period through to Election Day, the ECSL undertook comprehensive measures to guarantee the integrity and fairness of the election. Throughout the process, the Sri Lanka Police played a critical role in maintaining law and order, operating in close coordination with relevant institutions. Their efforts were marked by professionalism, neutrality, and strict adherence to the legal and regulatory framework governing the election. Appreciation is also due to all political parties and independent groups that contested the election, as well as to the citizens themselves—whose commitment to democratic values played a crucial role in ensuring a peaceful and orderly electoral process.

Several attempts were made to postpone the Local Authorities Election—including a Supreme Court petition—citing lack of funds, prompting PAFFREL, National People's Power (NPP), and Center for Policy Alternative (CPA) to file a fundamental rights case challenging the postponement as a violation of citizens' rights. In August, 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that the postponement of the election violated citizens' fundamental rights and the sovereignty of the people, holding the ECSL and the President responsible, and ordered the election to be held promptly.

A sizable portion of the polling stations were covered by PAFFREL, with the active participation of 3,000 election observers. PAFFREL has received 119 complaints (80 confirmed and 39 unconfirmed) during the Election Day. Among these, 116 complaints were in violation of election laws including illegal election propaganda and attempts to influence the voters.

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Several incidents of violation of election laws were reported from Rathgama, Kotte, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Kesbewa, Anuradhapura, Badulla, Wennappuwa, Naula, Hambantota, Puduoya, Colombo, Kalutara, Kuliyaipitiya, Biyagama, Galle, Hikkaduwa, Madukanda, Nochchiyagama, Matara, Katana, Siyambalapitiya, Mathugama, Beruwala, Yatiyantota, and Awissawella. These incidents ranged from illegal election propaganda and transportation of voters on Election Day to influencing voters. There were three incidents of violence which counted as assaults reported from Norochcholai, Puttalam, and Daraniyagala. Nevertheless, there were no incidents or situations during the Election Day that have had a significant impact on the polling. Importantly, incidents and complaints on abuse of state power, resources, and employees from the pre-election period to the polling day were localized and the impact of those malpractices on voter behavior are yet to be decided.

As noted by the Mobile Observers, Long Term Observers, and Stationary Observers deployed by PAFFREL on the polling day, our observers reported a steady inflow of voters throughout the day, all through the country without any excessive queues or crowd gathering in and around polling centers. PAFFREL stationary observers covered around 25 % of the polling station and mobile observers visited and made observations of another 25%. Adequate facilities were also provided for People with Disabilities at the polling stations with some exceptions. PAFFREL has observed some accessibility issues especially in some areas of the country and calls on ECSL to take corrective measures at polling stations in the future. No serious incidents were reported on illegal election campaigns in the vicinity of polling stations, public gatherings, intimidation, and influencing and transportation of voters. Overall voting processes and election day management was orderly without disruptions, and PAFFREL hopes that this orderly conduct of all stakeholders will continue through result declaration and establishment of Local Authorities.

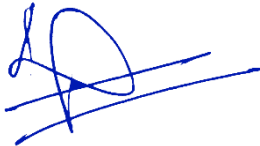
The Local Authorities Election 2025 saw several positive measures taken by the authorities who were directly involved with the conduct of the election process. The ECSL introduced a simple and efficient mobile application, Election Dispute Resolution (EDR) Mobile App, called EC EDR to report election issues in a quick method.

The ECSL also intervened to introduce key measures to ensure the electoral inclusion of persons with disabilities, including special ID cards, tactile ballot guides for the visually impaired, and accessible ballot box placement for wheelchair users. Free transport services were provided within polling premises for those unable to walk long distances, and for the first time, voters with partial visual impairments were allowed to use personal visual aids without prior approval to assist them in marking their ballots independently. PAFFREL extends its sincere appreciation to the Election Commission for the progressive steps taken to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the electoral process on an equal and fair basis, and for safeguarding their right to vote. PAFFREL acknowledges the initiatives taken by the ECSL, and calls for continued improvements.

Social media platforms were extensively utilized for the election campaigns in support of candidates, and citizens also were much involved and enthusiastic in the elections campaigns through social media channels. The ECSL's monitoring initiatives in this regard were crucial and PAFFREL in collaboration with the Hashtag Generation supports such initiatives. PAFFREL shared 717 campaign content in the pre-election period, 667 campaign content and, 108 Facebook paid campaigns in the cooling off period and 130 campaign content during the Election Day with the ECSL.

PAFFREL sends its deepest sympathies to the family of a female government officer who passed away while performing her duties at a polling station in a polling station in Gannoruwa Junior School.

From the pre-election period to the polling day, PAFFREL continued the election observation with 40 District Coordinators, 25 Field Coordinators, 2,300 Stationary Observers (Counting/Tabulation Centre Observers), and 800 Mobile Team Observers through 200 Mobile Teams, 160 Long Term Observers. In order to maintain the democratic nature of elections, PAFFREL keeps making interventions. All citizens, political actors, and authorities are urged by PAFFREL to be vigilant and stay calm in the post-election period.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rohana Hettiarachchi,
Executive Director