

Public servants asked to remain impartial Monitors promise redress in case of harassment

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by Dasun Edirisinghe

Local election monitors yesterday asked public servants including police constables to refuse to work in favour of anyone's election campaign and they would take care of them in case of victimisation.

Addressing a joint press conference organised by all local election observers at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, Executive Director of the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) Rohana Hettiarachchi said that they would help them seek justice even after the election in case of harassment.

He claimed that police were unable to take action against those who violated the election laws even after the closing of nominations.

"We will monitor how the police will tackle polls law violations within the next few days," Hettiarachchi said, adding that if the situation did not improve they would meet IGP N. K. Ilangakoon to discuss it.

Answering a question, Hettiarachchi said that they had to depend on foreign funds as no one in Sri Lanka provided them finances.

"Local businessmen and well-wishers fund monitoring of elections in the Philippines," he said, adding that the situation in Sri Lanka was totally different.

He said all the details of their income and expenditure were mentioned in the annual reports of all election monitoring organisations.

Executive Director of the Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE) Keerthi Tennakoon said the police did not arrest culprits in connection with the shooting incident in Maggona on Nov. 28.

Only one shooting incident reported so far in the run-up to the Presidential Election according to the police, but four incidents had actually happened in Kandy, Chilaw, Kurunegala and Kuliypitiya, Tennakoon said.

National Coordinator of National Polls Observation Centre (NPOC) Rasanga Harischandra said that election violence had decreased gradually.

Executive Director of Transparency International Sri Lanka S. Ranugge, National Coordinator of the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) D. M. Dissanayake, Director of Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE) Harsha Gunasena and National Coordinator of Mothers and Daughters of Lanka (MDL) Daya Herath also addressed the briefing.