

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION UNDERWORLD FIGURES SEEKING NOMINATIONS

BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY

Information pertaining to several underworld figures coming into the Local Government Polls as candidates subsequent to receiving nominations has come to light, informed sources said.

Information has come to light that two to four such persons from the Western and Southern Provinces involved in underworld activities, have had...



Local Government Election Underworld figures seeking nominations

...meetings with politicians and are seeking nominations for candidacy at the upcoming Local Government Poll.

It is believed that such a situation could result in a mentality of fear spreading among public servants employed at the relevant polling centres and counting stations, pertaining to the electorates and seats from where the said individuals involved in underworld activities are contesting from, and could also result in fellow contestants from other political parties withdrawing from the electoral race or becoming discouraged out of fear for personal safety and the safety of their family members.

Meanwhile, polls monitor, People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) condemned a recent statement made by United National Party Minister, John Amararatunga stating that voters need not be afraid to exercise their franchise because the government and the Police is under their control.

Executive Director of PAFFREL, Rohana Hettiarachchi said that the statement made by Amararatunga is a serious issue as it reflected a certain mindset widely held among certain politicians, past and present, with regard to power, adding that the responsibility was with the leaders of political parties to prevent such.

"He may have said this to motivate party members to vote for them, but it reflects a certain mindset... 'Now everything is ours and therefore we can do anything we want.' If this is how politicians conduct themselves, we cannot expect a fair election. There is always the possibility that such a statement may have an adverse influence on the work done by those responsible for maintaining law and order and also affect the voters. How political statements made by politicians during the period of an election have an impact, is a matter of critical importance."

He also noted that already the culture of distributing goods to voters has commenced including with the utilization of State funds and resources. The Deputy Elections Commissioner, M.M. Mohammed and the Secretary of the Ministry of Law and Order and Southern Development, Jagath P. Wijeweera were not available for comment.