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LG Polls: Monitoring bodies threaten legal action against Govt.

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Leading election monitoring bodies and civil organizations in the country, who questioned the Government's decision to rush in the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, threatened to take legal action against any move to postpone the Provincial Council polls using the said piece of legislation.

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CAFFE), Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE), Transparency International and Mothers and Daughters of Lanka questioned the Government's action to rush in the legislation which was approved by the Cabinet on Wednesday under which the Government was planning to hold elections for all nine Provincial Councils on the same day.

PAFFREL Executive Director Rohana Hettiarachchi told a media briefing yesterday that poll monitoring bodies and civil movements were always favourable towards holding Provincial Council elections on the same day but what all movements opposed was the intention of the Government.

"No one would oppose holding the Provincial Council elections on the same day but the issue is the intention of the government. It is clear that the intention of the Government is to avoid holding elections," he said.

"We do have an intention of taking legal action against the postponement of elections," Mr. Hettiarachchi added while saying that election monitoring bodies had already begun discussions with their legal advisors on the matter.

He suggested that the Government could hold elections for all Provincial Councils together by prematurely dissolving the councils whose terms do not lapse in October.

CaFFE Executive Director Keerthi Tennekoon questioned the genuineness of Opposition as well on the matter.

"We cannot see the Opposition parties and the Leader of Opposition making a serious effort to force the Government to hold the polls. People should take to the streets and surround Parliament and the local Government Ministry," he said.

CMEV National Coordinator Manjula Gajanayake said the Government should decide on holding Provincial Council Elections on the same day after having a dialogue with the poll monitoring bodies.

"Previous regime held elections using the entire State machinery illegally but this regime, which promised to stop such practices, is trying to avoid holding polls by violating a basic democratic principle of holding polls properly," he said.

Centre for Policy Alternatives Executive Director Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu said the present regime should be reminded of the promises it made during elections.

"This regime promised to uphold democracy and it should be reminded that these promises should be fulfilled," he said.

The polls monitoring bodies and the civil movements also urged the Government to hold the elections for more than 60 local bodies, which do not have any issues pertaining to delimitation.

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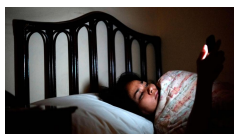
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