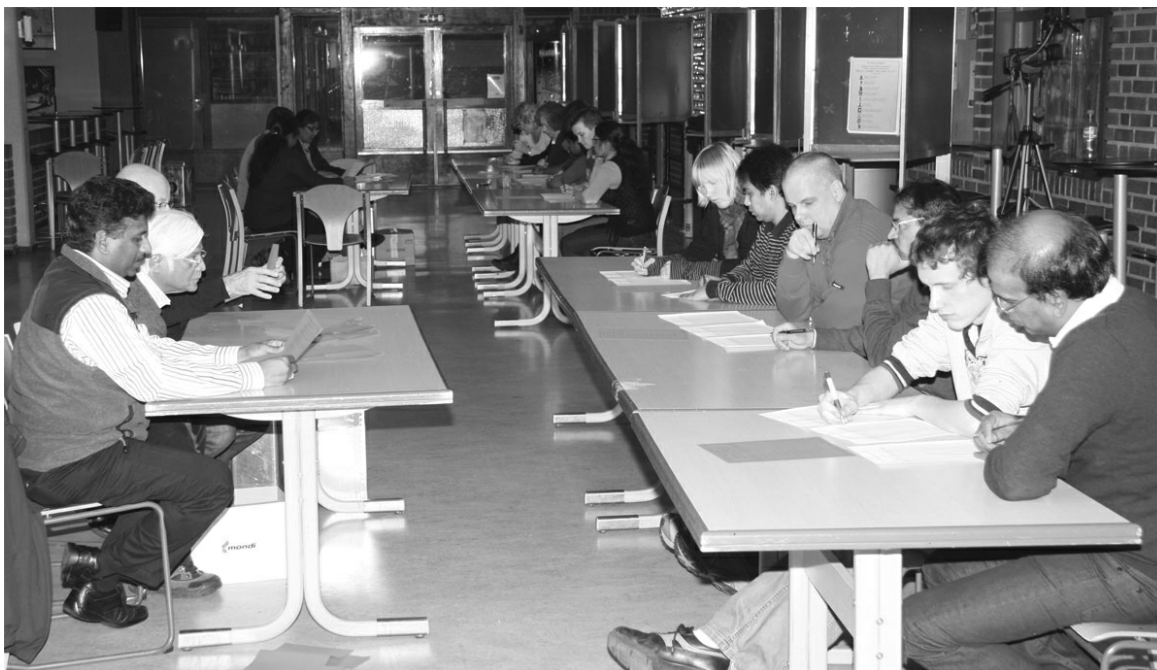


NEWS



Voters endorse Norwegian Council of Eelam Tamils

THE Norwegian Council of Eelam Tamils (NCET) attracted enough number of participants in the poll that took place Sunday November 15 in 16 centres of the different regions of Norway, in which 2767 voters turned out to elect 5 members under a national list and 10 under regional lists.

Noticeable of the results was Mr. Bjørnar Moxnes topping the national list polling 1864 votes. Mr. Vijayshankar from Tamil Nadu is elected to the Council topping the list of Western Region.

Considering the electoral history of Eelam Tamils, who have hitherto been imposed with constitutions and were voting in elections conducted by others, this is their first ever country-wide elections, conducted by them on their own, to form a political body of their own, based on their own constitution. The eight-member Election Commission performed the task with professional perfection, observers said.

The five members elected under the national list were Bjørnar Moxnes with 1864 votes, Panchakulasingham Kandiah with 1767 votes, Jeyasri Balasubramaniam with 1483 votes, Athithan Kumarasamy with 1287 votes and Tharmaseelan Tharmalingam with 1243 votes.

Under the regional list, the ten members elected were Sivaganesh Vadivelu, Rajendhram Ponuthurai, Sivarajah Vallipuram, Kannan Nagendram, Mary Florida Judin Francis, Rajaratnam Veluppillai, Rasakumar Kumaramsamy, Vijayshankar Asokan, D. Reggie and Ruben Ayathurai.

Participation of non Eelam Tamils in the elections for the cause of Eelam Tamils is an encouraging phenomenon, as any

democratic struggle addressing 'state fundamentalism' has to be waged internationally, inside each and every state of today, commented Tamil circles in Norway.

Meanwhile, institutions of Eelam Tamils functioning in Norway elected five members to the second chamber, House of Eelam Institutions in Norway. At the polls which took place on November 8, Kailainathan Ambalavanathan, Luxshjeha Sri, Nirmalan Selvarajah, Suthakar Kumarasamy and Varaluxmy Vasanthan were elected.

The constitution requires minimum 30 percent Eelam-Tamil voter turnout for any decisions on it, which has been accomplished in the present elections. The number of voters of the origin of the island of Sri Lanka including Sinhalese, obtained from Statistics Norway, is 8772.

The estimation is that the polling centres roughly covered 74 percent of the voting population, i.e., 6512 voters and the voter turnout was roughly 43 percent.

In a press statement released before the polls, Prof. Ilango Balasingam, a member of the Election Commission, said that it is the first time a Tamil diaspora body is being formed through country-wide democratic elections and he was hopeful that the efforts would set an example for the global organisation of Eelam Tamil polity.

Nine candidates contested for the five seats of the national list and 28 candidates entered the fray for the 10 seats under the regional list. Three native Norwegians and one Tamil of Tamil Nadu were among those who contested for the seats.

The NCET constitution, while

permitting vote only to people of Eelam Tamil descent above 16, allows even others to be elected provided they accept the principle of the Council advocating independent and sovereign Tamil Eelam in the island of Sri Lanka.

Another feature of the candidates list was that many of them are highly educated professionals in various walks of life. Seven on the list were women, eight were under 35 and two over 60.

5574 voters said yes to Vaddukkoaddai Resolution in May 2009. The Council is now formed based on the principle of this resolution. Roughly 50 percent of the number that stood for the principle now participated in the electoral process.

More than 50 percent of the number of voters, who said yes to the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution have participated in the formation of NCET in all the regions of Norway, except in the Western Region (Bergen). The voter turnout was also less than 30 percent in Bergen.

While the historic exercise of the election goes on record and the Council has now come into effect through a totally peaceful ballot, the reactions the efforts faced directly and indirectly, from inside and outside of the society, also go on record.

Eelam Tamil diaspora all over the world, aspiring organisation of its own polity, has to carefully make its own judgements by deducing motives behind personalities, sections of media operating in the diaspora and imperceptible approaches of powers to certain exerting sections of the society - all that caused a political discourse in the last couple of months about the formation of the Council, said political observers.



Toronto rally for refugees

Toronto Star

A TAMIL Canadian protester chokes back tears as she recalls a cellphone conversation she had several days ago with a cousin detained in a Sri Lankan camp holding Tamils displaced during the country's civil war.

"She doesn't know where her husband is. Her children have had no school for the past six months. There is no food or medication," said Uthayakumary Prapaharan, one of the roughly 600 people who gathered Saturday (November 21) to protest in front of the Sri Lankan consulate.

Prapaharan, a native of Sri Lanka who has lived in Canada for 23 years, said more than 60 of her relatives have spent time in the camps since the civil war ended in May.

"Some of my relatives have left the camps, so we know they are alive," said Prapaharan.

"Some are lost or have died already. But about 20 of my cousins and their kids are still inside the camps."

Tamil Canadians and their supporters, including Liberal MP Bob Rae and NDP Leader Jack Layton, expressed skepticism at Saturday's rally over the promises by Sri Lanka to not only allow the refugees to leave the camps but also to resettle the displaced Tamils.

"They are allowing some people to leave, but there's a question of where they are going," said Rae.

"There is a lot of talk of people being allowed to leave the big camp but there is a question of

where they are being moved to and where they are being allowed to settle."

The rally included repeated calls for non-governmental organizations and independent news media to be allowed into the camps.

"International observers don't really have full access to the camps, so we can't know for sure what's going on. That has to change," said Layton.

"The Canadian government has to insist that international observers be permitted."

So far, information has been sketchy.

"We only know a little bit through people who have been allowed to visit their relatives," said Ranjan Sri Ranjan, president of the Canadian Tamil Congress, which represents roughly 300,000 Tamils living in Canada.

"Even then, the people cannot touch their relatives. They have to stand behind barbed-wire fences and talk from several feet away."

The turnout was smaller than the 2,000 protesters anticipated by organizers. It was also a fraction of the up to 4,000 who stopped traffic on University Ave. in March.

"A lot of people are disillusioned. They don't know what to do," said Raj Thavaratnasingham, a member of Canadians Concerned About Sri Lanka, one of the organizers of the event.

"I have talked to so many people who are upset that nothing is happening to change things." (Edited for space)