

“Let us pledge to continue our struggle”

PAGE 3

Overwhelming support for Eelam in France referendum

OVER 99% of the voters voted in favour of Tamil Eelam at a referendum held across France on the weekend of December 12, 13.

Of the 31,148 eligible Eelam Tamil diaspora voters over 18 in France who participated in the referendum, 30,936 of them said yes to an independent and sovereign Tamil Eelam. The postal votes permitted to interior areas of France are yet to be counted and the number is expected to be between 2,000 and 3,000.

In the absence of any official statistics, police estimates earlier placed the number of adult Eelam Tamils in France between 25,000 and 35,000.

The near total turn out of voters amidst an international campaign that Tamil Eelam had drowned in Mullivaaykkal has stunned observers, reported TamilNet.

The public spirit has made sections of Tamil media, initially engaged in vicious campaign against the referendum, to make a U-turn supporting it later, the website added.

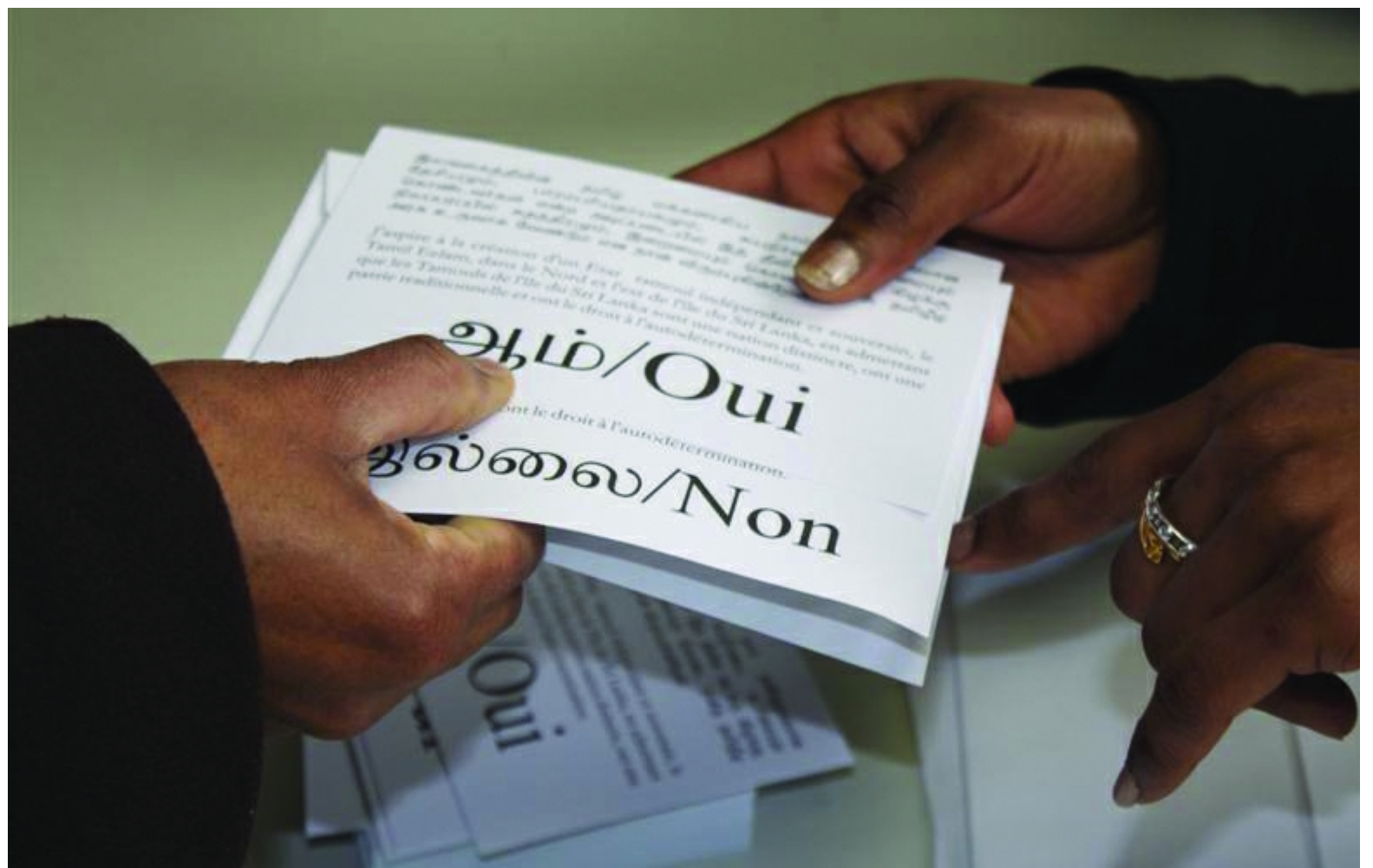
One of the poll observers, Stephen Gatignon, Mayor of the City of Sevrans in whose area around 1800 voters turned out, welcomed all democratic moves of Eelam Tamils.

In Paris, the booths in the area called '93 Department' alone polled around 12,000 votes. This is a locality where many Eelam Tamils live. "Voters flocked in as families and we watched it with awe," said one of the French election officials.

Voters came with identities to prove their Eelam Tamil origin and their residential status in France. Enthusiastic voters from neighbouring countries also tried to participate in the polling, but they were all turned back by the election officials as the poll was exclusive to Eelam Tamils of residential status in France.

Since the voting took place over two days, date of birth and place of birth details were entered in a centralised database to prevent duplication. Indelible ink that can stay for 48 hours was also applied to the hands of all voters.

The poll was officiated and supervised by independent French election officials drawn



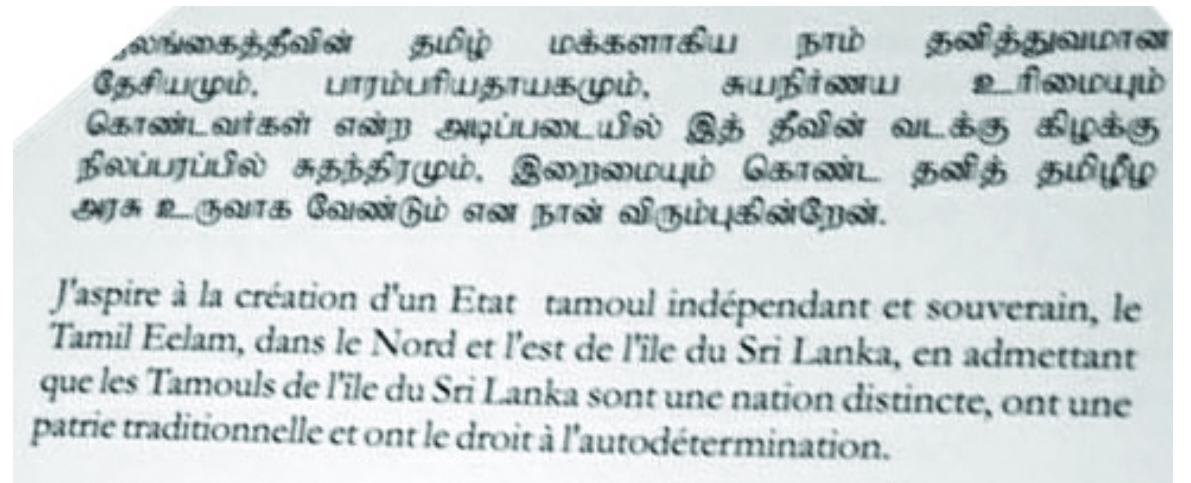
from the members of local government bodies.

Of the available accounts, 99.32 per cent said 'yes' to the following statement based on the main political principle of the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution of 1976 that was mandated by Tamils in the North and East of the island of Sri Lanka in 1977:

"I aspire for the formation of the independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam in the north and east territory of the island of Sri Lanka on the basis that the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka make a distinct nation, have a traditional homeland and have the right to self-determination."

Only 43 voters said 'no' and 169 votes were invalid.

The grand success of the referendum was due to enthusiastic participation of all generations of Eelam Tamils, said the organisers. Senior citizens and youngsters



The ballot sheet, including a close up of the French and Tamil statement that was endorsed

were in the forefront in organisation.

Braving harsh weather, many senior citizens took a special interest in distributing pamphlets

and in door-to-door campaign, Mr. Thiruchothy, one of the organisers, told TamilNet.

The referendum was organised by the formation committee

of the country council of Eelam Tamils called "The House of Tamil Eelam," supported by 61 Eelam Tamil organisations in France and two NGOs.