



Presidential Election 2019 Sri Lanka Brief Update No 01/14 October 2019

Basic Info:

Eight Presidential Election of Sri Lanka will be held on 16th November 2019. Thirty-Five candidates have handed over their nominations. The Ballot paper will be 66 cm long while 15,992,096 voters are eligible to vote. More than 1M Sri Lankan migrant workers and around 20,000 suspects in remand prisons are not eligible to vote.

Main contenders:

[Gotabaya Rajapaksa](#) (70) represents [Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna](#) (SLPP) He was the powerful defence secretary during 2005-2015. [Sajith Premadasa](#) (51) represents [New Democratic Front](#) (NDF). He has been the Minister of Housing since 2015. They are the two main contenders. GR is a younger brother of wartime Prime Minister (2004-2005) and President (2005-2015) Mahinda Rajapaksa. SP is the son of wartime Prime Minister (1978- 1989) & President (1989- 1993 May) Ranasinghe Premadasa.

Shared policies:

Both of them are strong supporters of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and evade the topics of human rights, reconciliation and transnational justice. For both of them economic development is the answer to ethnic conflict. Prioritising and strengthening national security, in the light of Easter Sunday attacks is another common promise both of them continue make. Both of them espouse populist politics. For example, GR promises to give free fertiliser to all paddy farmers. SP promises to provide one pair of shoes and one more school uniform free to all students and provide free pre-school education to every child.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa:

GR portrays himself as war winning defence secretary and use war triumphalism as a main ideological tool. At his inaugural public meeting, he promised to exonerate, on the next day of becoming President, all military men who had been sent to jail after having been charged of false accusations. Number of former commanders of the tri forces, including the present Army commander has given statements supporting GR. His slogan is to make a Sri Lanka “disciplined democracy”. He is promoted as an efficient and “strong leader”.

Sajith Premadasa:

SP says he has suffered from the war and terrorism. A LTTE suicide bomber assassinated his father, President Premadasa on 1st May 1993. He promises to continue [his father's welfare policies](#). In his inaugural public meeting, he promised to handover the responsibility of the national security to wartime (2005-2009) Army commander Field Marshal Sarath Fonseka. SP is promoted as non-corrupt, pro-poor and efficient leader. He continues to attract large crowds and is popular among the rural poor.

GR support base- at a glance:

SLPP, the front GR represents has strong base (around 50%) among the majority Sinhala Buddhist constituency of 74%. Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) headed by president Sirisena has decided to vote GR, He has the support of three wartime anti-LTTE Tamil para military groups. They are [Eelam Peoples Democratic Party](#) (EPDP) in the North, Tamil United People's Front (TUPF) and The Tamil National People's Front (TNPf) in the east. [Ceylon Workers' Congress](#) (CWC), which represents Tamil plantation workers, too support GR. Some Smaller Muslim groups also support him. In general, Tamils and Muslims are fearful of him becoming the president. No mainstream Tamil or Muslim parties have pledged their support to GR.

SR support base - at a glance:

The vote base of the NDF, which SP represents much smaller (around 30%) among the Sinhala Buddhist constituency. A breakaway group of the SLFP has decided to support SR. Two mainstream Muslim parties namely [Sri Lanka Muslim Congress](#) and [All Ceylon Makkal Congress](#) Party have decided to Support SP. [Tamil Progressive Front \(TPA\)](#) comprises the Democratic Peoples' Front (DPF), National Union of Workers (NUW) and Up Country Peoples Front (UCPF) has pledged their support to SP.

Tamil politics:

The largest Tamil political party the [Tamil National Alliance](#) (TNA) has not stated its position yet. [Tamil National People's Front](#) (TNPf) has called on Tamil people to boycott the presidential election.

Other candidates:

Among other candidates, [Anura Kumara Disanayaka](#) (AKD) of the National Peoples Force (NPF) is considered as the third and alternative candidate. He is the leader of Marxist –nationalist Peoples Liberation Front (JVP). NPF is an alliance of dozens of left leaning organisations. Former Army commander, General [Mahesh Senanayake](#) contests from the National People's Movement (NPM), a collective of island-wide civil society organisations. [Dr. Ajantha Perera](#) is the only female candidate in the presidential race. She contests from the Socialist Party.

Elpitiya Local Authority Election results:

Elpitiya local government body is situated in Galle district of the Southern Province. The delayed election to the Local Government Authority was held on 11th October 2019. SLPP won it handsomely. The result: SLPP- 23,372 votes (17 seats); UNP (=NDF) - 10,113 votes (07 seats); UPFA (=SLFP) - 5273 votes (03 seats); JVP (=NPF) - 2435 votes (02 seats).

In percentage, wise SLPP has 50+% of votes while its electoral ally SLFP has 10+% votes.

UNP (=NDF) has 23+%. JVP (=NPF) has 5%+. Although this cannot be taken as a sample of whole of Sri Lanka the results cannot be ignored.