

Violence, the winner in Sri Lanka election

United National Front defeat People's Alliance

In an election marred by unprecedented violence, the United National Front (UNF) led by the United National Party (UNP) gained victory, turning round the defeat suffered only an year ago. The Sri Lankan President called general elections for 5 December, after her People's Alliance (PA) government lost its majority in Parliament when several MPs defected to the opposition.

The parliamentary election was held in 22 electoral districts* under a proportional representation system and 4,610 candidates belonging to 26 political parties and 106 independent groups contested for 196 seats in the 225-member legislature. Twenty nine others were nominated on the National List, proportionate to the number of votes received by each political party.

Of the 12,428,208 registered voters throughout the island, 9,449,813 (75.8%) turned out to vote. Just over 5% of the votes were rejected. The UNF gained 109 seats in Parliament, polling 4,086,026 votes (45.6%) and its ally the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) led by Rauf Hakeem secured five seats in the Eastern Province with 105,346 (1.2%) votes. Together, the UNF and the SLMC have a wafer-thin majority in Parliament.

The PA won only 77 seats with 3,330,815 (37.2%) votes. PA's ally, the People's Liberation Front (JVP) gained 16 seats with 815,353 (9.1%) votes, six more than it won at the elections in 2000. The Sinhalese nationalist Sihala Urumaya received only 50,665 (0.6%) votes, down by 60% from the 2000 elections, and failed to secure any seat.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), a coalition of four Tamil parties, gained 15 seats in the north-east with 348,264 (3.9%) votes. D Sitharthan's Democratic People's Liberation Front (DPLF) won one seat in the Vanni. But the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) led by Douglas Devananda, PA's hope in the north-east, fared badly, gaining 72,783 (0.8%) votes and winning only two seats in Jaffna District.

The PA's main election theme went against the findings of pre-election opinion polls that indicated an overwhelming support in Sinhalese society for peace and a negotiated settlement with the LTTE.

Sri Lankan journal 'Pravada'

Observers say that PA leader President Chandrika Kumaratunge was confident of winning the elections, particularly in light of the fact that the UNP had lost 11 successive general, provincial and local government elections since 1994. But PA's share of the votes fell from 49% in 1994 to 45% in 2000 and to just over 37% in 2001. The PA received less votes than the UNP in all the districts in the south, except Moneragala, although it secured a majority in 13 districts in last year's elections.

The UNP won a majority in 17 districts increasing the votes to 45.6% from 40.2% last year. The Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) led by Arumugam Thondaman and Upcountry People's Front (UPF) headed by P Chandrasekaram contested on the UNP ticket boosting the votes in the Hill Country. In Nuwara Eliya District, the UNP increased its votes by 16% from last year, while the PA was down by 27%. Observers say that the UNP also received substantial Muslim votes in Kegalle, Matale and Puttalam districts.

The JVP continued its rise as the third force in Sri Lankan politics, its votes increasing from 6% in 2000 to over 9%. It won more seats in Anuradhapura, Gampaha, Kandy, Kegalle and Ratnapura districts. Before the elections, the JVP cornered the PA into an agreement as the price for support in Parliament. The agreement envisaged a number of measures which appeared to be in favour of the poorer sections of society.

The turn-out was low in the north-east districts. In eastern Batticaloa, the turn out was 68.2% and in northern Vanni 46.8%. In Jaffna, it was as low as 31.1%. A number of organisations in the north-east have been campaigning for Tamil electoral unity and the TNA benefited by the approval of the LTTE. Expatriate Tamils had also urged for the formation of a united front. Reports say that LTTE cadre even joined the election campaign of the TNA in some areas. The TNA increased its votes by 27% in Jaffna and 44% in the Vanni.

Just before the elections, the government decided to close the checkpoints between Army-held areas and LTTE-controlled territory, alleging security reasons. Observers believe that the decision was aimed at preventing voters crossing into Army areas where polling stations were established. According to estimates, some 30,000 Tamils in the Vanni and a similar number in Batticaloa were thus denied their franchise rights.

There were 91 foreign election monitors, including 55 from the European Union (EU). Local election monitoring agencies, People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) and the Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE) say they deployed 912 mobile monitors and 8,225 other monitors in all 22 districts. The monitors reported voter intimidation, impersonation, poll rigging and violence in many districts. The two agencies have concluded that conditions for free and fair elections did not exist in some electorates of Kandy, Kurunegala, Gampaha and Matale districts.

Concern has been expressed over violence in the run up to, during and after the elections, despite the deployment of some 40,000 police officers. Observers say the two major parties, the UNP and the PA, were guilty of perpetrating violence. The Colombo-based Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) has recorded 2,734 incidents of violence and election offences up to the polls and 422 after the elections.

* Sri Lanka is divided into twenty five administrative districts. Jaffna and Kilinochchi administrative districts form the Jaffna electoral district. The Vanni electoral district comprises the Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar administrative districts.

General Election Results

5 December 2001

Districts	% turnout	UNF	PA	JVP	TNA	SLMC	EPDP	DPLF	Total seats
Colombo	76.3	12	7	2	-	-	-	-	21
Gampaha	80.4	9	7	2	-	-	-	-	18
Kalutara	81.7	5	4	1	-	-	-	-	10
Kandy	76.0	7	4	1	-	-	-	-	12
Matale	78.0	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	5
Nuwara Eliya	82.3	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	7
Galle	81.1	5	4	1	-	-	-	-	10
Matara	79.4	4	3	1	-	-	-	-	8
Hambantota	79.8	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	7
Jaffna	31.1	1	-	-	6	-	2	-	9
Vanni	46.8	2	-	-	3	-	-	1	6
Batticaloa	68.2	-	1	-	3	1	-	-	5
Digamadulla	82.5	1	2	-	1	3	-	-	7
Trincomalee	79.9	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	4
Kurunegala	79.0	8	6	1	-	-	-	-	15
Puttalam	71.5	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	7
Anuradhapura	77.4	4	3	1	-	-	-	-	8
Polonnaruwa	80.4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	5
Badulla	81.5	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	8
Moneragala	82.1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	5
Ratnapura	83.4	5	4	1	-	-	-	-	10
Kegalle	80.1	5	3	1	-	-	-	-	9
National list		13	11	3	1	1	-	-	29
Total	75.8	109	77	16	15	5	2	1	225

UNF - United National Front
PA - People's Alliance
JVP - People's Liberation Front
TNA - Tamil National Alliance

SLMC - Sri Lanka Muslim Congress
EPDP - Eelam People's Democratic Party
DPLF - Democratic People's Liberation Front

Votes received by parties

Districts	Electors	Polled	UNP	PA	JVP	TNA	SLMC
Colombo	1,440,682	1,099,382	546,417	353,401	117,404	12,696	-
Gampaha	1,285,993	1,033,402	437,289	428,780	113,990	-	-
Kalutara	717,764	586,236	254,339	226,468	60,451	-	-
Kandy	838,687	637,679	314,297	233,637	37,146	-	-
Matale	299,606	233,539	109,991	88,999	16,063	-	-
Nuwara Eliya	417,163	343,472	215,157	77,733	11,080	-	-
Galle	698,566	566,475	238,989	232,931	61,806	-	-
Matara	534,694	424,787	171,661	171,141	54,476	-	-
Hambantota	369,073	294,540	112,520	105,175	59,693	-	-
Jaffna	633,457	197,279	16,245	-	242	102,324	3364
Vanni	218,861	102,361	26,575	7,831	683	41,950	-
Batticaloa	282,079	192,383	22,638	25,705	119	86,284	26,725
Digamadulla	360,497	297,440	58,468	65,246	9,502	48,789	75,257
Trincomalee	212,280	169,567	62,930	32,997	6,095	56,121	-
Kurunegala	1,045,652	826,129	382,768	332,775	63,652	-	-
Puttalam	426,193	304,847	146,873	120,981	18,095	-	-
Anuradhapura	489,746	379,140	165,055	149,393	40,005	-	-
Polonnaruwa	240,444	193,351	86,786	73,679	18,956	-	-
Badulla	491,288	400,463	201,173	138,443	26,820	-	-
Moneragala	247,280	202,971	80,549	81,805	21,987	-	-
Ratnapura	623,506	520,061	227,202	212,794	40,377	-	-
Kegalle	554,697	444,309	208,104	170,901	36,711	-	-
Total	12,428,662	8,955,869	4,086,026	3,330,815	815,353	348,164	105,346

These included murder, attempted murder, hurt, grievous hurt, assault, robbery and arson. There were also incidents of threat and intimidation and damage to property. Fifty five people, including 17 on election day, were killed and there were 88 attempted murders and 262 incidents of arson. Twenty incidents of misuse of state property and 43 election offences were recorded.

In several places, election monitors were attacked. A curfew immediately after elections could not prevent the violence continuing. The PA, which was the ruling party before elections, was responsible for 1,346 incidents and UNP for 1,021. Revenge attacks by UNP supporters increased as soon the party won the elections. In the north-east, the EPDP was responsible for 27 incidents and the SLMC for 69. The CMEV expressed concern over the increase in the use of firearms. Firearm use was reported in 676 incidents, an increase of 3% from elections in 2000. (For details see interim report of CMEV - www.cpalanka.org). Other reports say that security force deserters, who had escaped with their weapons, were involved in the violence.

In mid-November, a magistrate in Akkuressa ordered the arrest of four members of Minister Mangala Samaraweera's security unit for injuring eight people near Deniyaya in Matara District. In an attack by UNP supporters on Minister Mahinda Rajapakse's office at Tissamaharama in Hambantota District on 12 November, four people were seriously wounded. UNP's Batticaloa candidate Thambirasa Jeyakumar, 50, was shot dead on 17 November by gunmen.

Senior politicians are said to have been directly involved in a number of incidents. Observers say President Chandrika's utterances may have encouraged violence. She told PA supporters in mid-November at Tissamaharama that 'it is not wrong to kill a killer'.

In Jaffna, TNA was attacked by alleged EPDP members on 28 November, and I Perampalam was killed. Another person died later in hospital. TNA candidates Mavai Senathirajah and MK Sivajilingam and 17 others were wounded. The Jaffna magistrate ordered the arrest of three EPDP members. PA supporter B Dissanayake was shot dead by alleged UNP members at Kuliyapitiya in Kurunegala District on 30 November.

The most brutal incident occurred at Udathalawinne, five miles north-east of Kandy on election day. Ten SLMC supporters were massacred by an alleged PA gang. The incident took place in the electorate of former deputy Defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte. A court in

Teldeniya has issued warrants for the arrest of his sons Lohan Ratwatte and Chanuka Ratwatte. Both are absconding.

On 3 December, nine people including two from the Presidential Security Division (PSD) and four Army deserters, were detained by the police in Maturata, 10 miles north-east of Nuwara Eliya. They had in their possession grenade launchers and T-56 assault rifles. Allegations have been made that they were in Nuwara Eliya District to assassinate SB Dissanayake, who crossed over from the PA to the UNF. The EU observer mission condemned the existence of private armies and said that the use of the PSD by politicians undermined normal political activity in certain areas.

Two people, allegedly connected to the Nuwara Eliya PA politician P Sathasivam, were arrested by police in Kitulgala, 40 miles east of Colombo, with 110,000 forged votes. The EU observer mission raised concern about Jaffna, where the registered electorate is 633,457 but the number of persons actually resident is only around 500,000. This means that there were surplus voter cards and ballot papers in Jaffna.

The EU observer mission noted in a report that the freedom to express views publicly was prevented by serious incidence of violence and the primary source of the violence were the largest parties. It further said that the statements of the President, a leading UNP candidate and the exiled JVP leader Somawansa Amarasinghe were highly irresponsible and could have been construed as incitement to commit violence. A CMEV request for re-poll in areas seriously affected by violence was denied by the Elections Commissioner.

The EU mission said that the PA and associated parties such as the EPDP, misused state resources. This included use of state vehicles and buildings, state personnel and funds. State TV *Rupavahini* seriously breached the principle of fairness of equal access to political parties, as did the state-controlled newspapers. The state media also failed to respect a moratorium on campaigning during the final days of the campaign.

The observer mission also stated that the government in power had the duty to ensure a non-violent election, but failed in its obligations. The mission criticized the decision to close checkpoints in the north-east thus preventing people from exercising their right to vote. It expressed concern at the dominant role played by the EPDP in the electoral process in Jaffna, with reports that some areas, and notably the islands, were closed to polling agents from other parties.

The head of the EU mission, John Cushnahan MEP, said after the elections that party leaders now had a duty to ensure that those who were elected to Parliament on the back of violence are not rewarded either by being given a place in the government or high office in their respective party.

Mr Cushnahan declared that the full rigours of the law should be applied to those who engaged in violence irrespective of their party allegiance. He urged that action must be taken to prevent the fairness of any future election being undermined by politically motivated violence, abuse of state resources, unequal access to the media, the politicization of the police and the Army and the existence of private armies.

UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe was sworn in as Prime Minister on 9 December, by President Chandrika. But she refused to accept SB Dissanayake as minister of *Samurthi*, the poverty alleviation programme. She had earlier accused PA dissident Dissanayake of corruption involving the funds allocated for the *Samurthi* programme.

A Cabinet of 25 ministers was appointed on 12 December and 27 were nominated as non-Cabinet ministers. President Chandrika was reluctant to give up the Defence and Finance portfolios. Sources say that she gave in after pressure from a foreign nation. Tilak Marapane was appointed Defence minister and KN Choksy took Finance. The power struggle between President and Prime Minister is expected to continue.

Observers say various factors may have contributed to the fall of the PA. Sri Lankan journal *Pravada* says as follows: "The mistake of the PA was its insensitivity to social consequences of economic mismanagement that has resulted in high inflation, rising cost of living, withdrawal of subsidies and dwindling employment opportunities for the young.

"On the ethnic conflict, the Kumaratunge administration's policy during the past two to three years has been quite erratic and inconsistent. Interspersed with the rhetoric of peace and a policy of war, Kumaratunge's contradictory strategy could not fully utilize the assistance offered by the international community to resume negotiations.

"On the question of political reforms, PA's record has been one of dismal failure. The Sinhalese racist electoral platform on which President Kumaratunge and her Prime Minister fought the parliamentary election this time is the ultimate degeneration of a political formation that has had so much promise and potential for democratic reform".

Cabinet Ministers

Ranil Wickremasinghe - Prime Minister, Policy Development, Implementation, *Samurthi*

Karu Jayasuriya - Power and Energy

Gamini Atukorale - Transport, Highways, Aviation

KN Choksy - Finance

Tilak Marapane - Defence

SB Dissanayake - Agriculture, Livestock

GL Peiris - Constitutional Affairs

Tyronne Fernando - Foreign Affairs

Rauf Hakeem - Post Development, Shipping, Eastern Development, Muslim Religious Affairs

Arumugam Thondaman - Housing, Plantation Infrastructure

Mahinda Wijsekera - Fisheries

Ms Amara Piyasiri Ratnayake - Women's Affairs

WJM Lokubanadara - Justice, Law Reform, National Reconciliation

Gamini Perera - Irrigation, Water Management

Rukman Senanayake - Environment, Natural Resources

Alick Aluvihara - Home, Provincial & Local Government

John Amaratunge - Interior

P Dayaratne - Health, Nutrition, Welfare

Ananada Kularatne - Southern Region Development

Lakshman Kiriella - Plantation Industries

Gamini Lokuge - Tourism

MH Mohamed - Western Region Development

Bandula Gunawardena - Rural Economy

Tissa Attanayake - Central Region Development

Abdul Cader - Cooperatives

Non-Cabinet Ministers

Karunasena Kodituwakku - Human Resources Development, Education, Cultural Affairs

Mahinda Samarasinghe - Employment, Labour

Vajira Abeywardena - Public Administration, Management & Reform

Cabir Hasheem - Tertiary Education & Training

Imtiaz Bakeer Marker - Mass Communication

Percy Samaraweera - Social Welfare

Lakshman Seneviratne - Water Management

HGP Nelson - Irrigation

Abdul Hameed Azwer - Parliamentary Affairs

P Harrison - Housing Development

Suranimala Rajapakse - School Education

Jayatilleke Podinilame - North-West Development

RAD Sirisena - Samurthi

Johnston Xavier Fernando - Youth Affairs & Sports
Lal Dharmapriya Gamage - Assistant Foreign Affairs

Jaylath Jayawardena - Rehabilitation, Refugees

Earl Gunasekera - Home, Provincial, Local Government

P Chandrasekaran - Estate Infrastructure

Thiyagarajah Maheswaran - Hindu Affairs

Rohitha Bogollagama - Industries

Susantha Punchinilame - Rural Development

Mohamed Maharoo - Urban Public Utilities

Lebbe Marikkar - Highways

Upali Piyasoma - State Transport

Ranjitha Senaratne - Land

Ravi Karunanayake - Commerce Consumer Affairs

Malinda Moragoda - Economic Reform, Science & Technology