

THE 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: THE ROAD AHEAD FOR SRI LANKA

Organised by:



21
Aug
FRI

ISAS-KAS Panel Discussion

Speakers:

HE Sashikala Premawardhane

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Singapore

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Mr Christian Echle

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Chairperson:

Professor C Raja Mohan

Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS

Time:

3.00pm - 5.00pm

(SG Time)

This event will be conducted via **ZOOM**. Registration is compulsory via the link below:

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Event Synopsis

After months of uncertainty and delays, Sri Lanka held its parliamentary elections on 5 August 2020.

While the Gotabaya Rajapaksa government's victory was expected, the overwhelming numbers it received were unprecedented. It won 145 seats, only five seats short of an outright two-third majority in parliament. It has now formed a majority government with its allies. The parliamentary polls were a referendum on the government's handling of COVID-19 and an endorsement of its performance in the last eight months.

However, winning the elections is just the first hurdle for the president who now faces several key domestic and international challenges. The COVID-19 outbreak has greatly disrupted lives in the country. Even though the government has succeeded in managing the pandemic, its impact on the country's economy, which is already reeling from high foreign debt, low gross domestic product and decreasing savings, is significant.

Moreover, amid the great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean, the Gotabaya government has opted for a neutral and balanced foreign policy. While India has expressed a keenness to work with Sri Lanka, the China factor will loom large in their relationship. The recent border clashes between India and China could compel Sri Lanka to take sides rather than continue with its equidistant foreign policy.

Further, allegations of human right abuses when Gotabaya was Secretary of Defense during Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidency could influence the relations of a number of western states with Sri Lanka. The government also has the task of assuring the minority communities that their rights will be protected.

Against this backdrop, the panel discussion will examine the political, economic, social and international challenges and imperatives for Gotabaya's government following the parliamentary polls.

ISAS Related Publications

[Chulanee Attanayake and Roshni Kapur, "Forthcoming Parliamentary Elections in Sri Lanka: Initial Observations", 3 August 2020](#)

[Chulanee Attanayake and Roshni Kapur, Sri Lanka: Debate on Holding Elections During a Health Crisis", 26 July 2020](#)

For enquiries, please contact Jordan Ang at jordanang@nus.edu.sg

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