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Lanka prez dissolves parliament; calls for snap polls on April 25

Colombo: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Monday dissolved parliament six months ahead of its schedule and called a snap election on April 25. He signed a gazette notification dissolving parliament from midnight on Monday, the government printers department said.

Rajapaksa sacked parliament after the minimum term of four-and-a-half years necessary to dissolve it was completed on midnight Sunday. The current parliament was appointed on September 1, 2015.

"We have received a formal notification dissolving parliament and setting out the election calendar," an election commission official said. Political parties and independent groups can file nomination papers later this month between March 12 and 19 and the first session of the newly elected parliament has been scheduled for May 14, the official said quoting from the presidential decree.

Rajapaksa, 70, won a landslide at November presidential polls and appointed



POWER MOVE: Gotabaya

his older brother and former president Mahinda as prime minister, consolidating their hold on power.

Mahinda, who had been president twice and PM three times, is expected to lead his Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP, or People's Front) party to a comfortable victory at next month's polls. Political commentators have said it would be a formidable challenge for the opposition to prevent Rajapaksa securing a two-thirds majority which will allow him sweeping powers to govern the nation of 21 million people.

The United National Party (UNP) of former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has been plagued by a debilitating internal power struggle. AGENCIES