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Sri Lanka sees 71% polling

7th 6/8/20

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Polling for Sri Lanka's parliamentary election concluded on Wednesday with a voter turnout of 71%. The results will be released on Thursday, the Election Commission said.

After postponing the elections twice in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Sri Lanka became the first South Asian country to hold election months after COVID-19 struck, claiming 11 lives in the island. However, the country's public health sector managed to contain the numbers - 286 active cases as of Wednesday - with support from the Army, drawing international praise, including from the World Health Organization.

Following health guide-

lines stipulated by the Election Commission, masked voters queued up in polling stations that were equipped with hand washing facilities. They maintained physical distancing with fellow voters, as they elected representatives to the new Parliament, in which the ruling Rajapaksa administration is seeking a two-thirds majority.

The race includes two past Presidents - Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is Prime Minister in the current caretaker government, and Maithripala Sirisena - former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and his United National Party's former deputy leader Sajith Premadasa, who now leads a breakaway alliance. The Rajapaksas' Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna

(SLPP, or People's Party) is widely expected to secure a comfortable majority in the 225-member legislature, paving way for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to yet again appoint his elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister.

Though many feared that the voter turnout might drop due to the pandemic, voters came out to exercise their franchise, recording a 71 % turnout, about 6 percentage points lower than the turnout in the general elections of 2015.

There were no major incidents of violence reported on polling day. "No violence, only violations," chairman of Election Commission Mahinda Deshapriya told a media conference Wednesday evening.