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**Sri Lanka records huge turnout of
over 70% in general election**

COLOMBO, PTI: Sri Lankans, wearing face masks and carrying their own pens, turned out in large numbers to vote on Wednesday in the twice-postponed parliamentary election which is expected to be won by the powerful Rajapaksa family-run Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP).

According to Chairman of the National Election Commission, Mahinda Deshapriya, the election, conducted amidst COVID-19 pandemic fears, concluded in a peaceful manner, with a voter turnout of over 70%.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa noted that Sri Lanka has become the first South Asian nation to hold a major election at a time when Covid-19 danger has not gone away completely from the world.

According to the election commission, Ampara (72.8%), Killinochchi (71.52%), Mannar (79.49%), Vavuniya (74%), Mullaithivu (76.25%), Trincomalee (73.5%), Batticaloa (76.15%) and Nuwara Eliya (75%) recorded high turnout.

The polls closed at 5 pm and the ballot boxes were transported to counting centres. The counting would take place



Voters wait in a queue to cast their ballots in the parliamentary election outside a polling station in Colombo on Wednesday. AFP

only on Thursday - a departure from the practice of counting the ballot from 8 pm on the election night.

Results today

The results would be announced by Thursday evening, Deshapriya said. "We have to be grateful to the voting public for recording such a high turnout despite corona fears."

He said considering that the election was delayed by more than three months and differences among some political groups, the voters should be praised for turning up in large numbers and recording a 70% turnout. Long queues

of voters were seen at polling centres in some districts from the time polling began at 7 am.

The election monitoring groups said despite a few complaints of illegal activities by certain groups the election was held peacefully.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa voted in his Colombo suburb polling station while his elder brother and the prime ministerial aspirant Mahinda Rajapaksa voted in his home constituency in the southern district of Hambantota.

"We are hopeful of winning two-thirds support," Mahinda Rajapaksa, 74, told reporters after voting.