



# ELECTION & CAMPAIGN WATCH

## 2024 Sri Lankan Elections

### 1 Ranil Wickremesinghe declared as UNP common candidate

President Wickremesinghe addressing the meeting invited all party members who left the United National Party (UNP) and joined the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) to return. This effectively opens a battle between the leaders of SJB and UNP, to front the anti-National People's Power (NPP) candidate. Among RW's campaign slogans are "The only option is Ranil (Ekama Vikalpaya Ranil)"

### 2 SLPP MPs push for early General Election ahead of Presidential race

A general election is perceived to be better for the Rajapaksas as they cannot become or field one of the main Presidential candidates. A general election would enable the Rajapaksa-led Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) to test their strength following the fall of the Rajapaksa political family in 2022.

### 3 A new SLFP-led alliance announcement gets postponed again

The launch of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) new alliance has been postponed for the third time. This is likely due to differences among potential partners, including former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, and uncertainties in securing allegiance of MPs and other political figures.

### 4 NPP sends different signals on economic policy

NPP stalwart Sunil Handunnetti warns foreign investors against purchasing national assets while NPP MP Vijitha Herath indicates an NPP-led government would seek to amend and continue with the IMF agreement. The NPP met the IMF delegation in Colombo on 14 March 2024.

### 5 New ITAK leadership resigns

Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi's (ITAK) newly-elected president Sivagnamam Shritharan has resigned from his post on grounds that his appointment is unconstitutional, urging the party to re-elect a leader after ongoing court proceedings conclude and that he will re-run for the party leadership.

### 6 MP Rohitha Abeygunawardena elected as COPE Chair

Member of Parliament Rohitha Abeygunawardena was elected as the new Chairman of the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) with a majority of votes. This was likely a SLPP flex to demonstrate their parliamentary power, and followed the return of Basil Rajapaksa to the country.

### 7 URF leader Patali Champika Ranawaka visits India

United Republican Front (URF) leader PCR addressed an international summit in India this week. This likely indicates India's proactive engagement with certain political factions in Sri Lanka, pre-empting Chinese influence in Sri Lankan politics and securing its regional dominance and interests.

### 8 New electoral reforms under discussion

The government is in the process of revising the constitution to allow direct election by voters in their constituencies for 160 MPs. This reform is seen by the Opposition as a tactic to delay elections.

### 9 NUW leader Palani Digambaram says Presidential elections should be held first

National Union of Workers (NUW) leader Palani Digambaram says that a presidential election should be held first, and that Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Disanayake are the front running candidates. This indicates NUW's alignment with SJB leadership, marking a split in the Malaiyaha Tamil vote between SJB and UNP (Minister Jeevan Thondaman of Ceylon Workers Congress'/CWC).

### 10 Muslim political parties yet to indicate alliance preferences

Main Muslim parties, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and All Ceylon Muslim Congress (ACMC) have not yet indicated any preference in terms of entering political alliances in the run-up the elections this year. Both parties are likely to be concerned over potential swing of its youth constituency to the NPP.