

## **45,000 polling booths to be set up for Sri Lanka Presidential election**

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***Sri Lanka's elections chief Mahinda Deshapriya displays ballot boxes that will be used in the upcoming presidential election. (Photo/ AP)***

**Colombo:** The Election Commission (EC) of Sri Lanka announced that it would set up 45,000 polling booths across the country for the November 16 presidential election.

EC officials said that during previous elections, only 35,000 polling booths had been set up island-wide, but this year, 10,000 additional booths would be added due to the two-feet long ballot paper, reports Xinhua news agency.

For the first time in Sri Lankan history, the ballot paper will be so long, due to a record-breaking 35 candidates running for presidency, the Commission said.

"Therefore one polling booth will be set up for every 400 voters in comparison to one booth being set up for every 800 voters in previous polls," the officials added.

These are the island nation's eighth presidential election, with incumbent President Maithripala Sirisena's term coming to an end in January 2020.

Meanwhile, EC Chairman Mahinda Deshapriya said on November 1 that the Commission might announce the winner on November 17 but if the top two candidates fail to secure 50 per cent votes for an absolute majority, then the results would be delayed till later that day.

He added that if the Commission was led to count preferential votes to decide the winner, the results could be announced by November 17 night, the Daily Mirror reported.

In response to an invitation by the EC, the European Union has deployed a mission to observe the election.

Of the 35 hopefuls, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna's (SLPP) candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa; and the ruling United National Party's (UNP) Deputy Leader Sajith Premadasa, who is contesting as the National Democratic Front (NDF) contender, have emerged as the two favourites.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who served as the Defence Minister in his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa's administration, oversaw the end of Sri Lanka's brutal 25-year civil war in 2009.

Sajith is the son of late President Ranasinghe Premadasa, who ruled the country with an iron fist before he was assassinated by a Tamil suicide bomber on May 1, 1993.