

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena dissolves parliament

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Colombo: Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena today dissolved the parliament, paving the way for fresh parliamentary elections in mid August, eight months ahead of the schedule.

President Sirisena has signed the relevant gazette notification and sent to the Government Printer, a presidential source said.

The Government Printer's office confirmed the receipt of the duly signed notice from the President.

The long awaited dissolution of the 225-member house will pave the way for a fresh parliamentary election mid August, sources said.

The election will come eight months ahead of the scheduled date in April 2016. However, the President had promised to dissolve the parliament on April 23 of this year at the conclusion of 100 days of his new government.

He held the decision back to implement his reforms - both constitutional and electoral.

Although the constitutional reform in the form of 19th Amendment was approved in late April, the electoral reforms or the 20A ran into a snag as political parties failed to reach consensus on the ideal system of elections to replace the current proportional representation system.

Sirisena appointed a minority government headed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe after defeating Mahinda Rajapaksa in the January presidential election.

Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) was opting for early polls having backed Sirisena against Rajapaksa.

However, Sirisena's reform bid was scuttled by a group of loyalists of Rajapaksa who wanted one of them to be named prime minister over Wickremesinghe.

Sirisena, faced with international support for his reconciliation with the Tamil minority, had promised the US and the international community that a new government would be in place by September.

- PTI