

# Executive Presidents of Sri Lanka

After the Constitution of Sri Lanka was amended in 1978 a new post of Executive Presidency came into effect. So far five political leaders have been elected to the post after holding Presidential Elections. They were elected from different political parties for a six year term in the office. They can be re-elected to the post by holding either a referendum or a fresh Presidential Election. The present Executive President Mahinda Rajapaksa was re-elected for the second time and his second term will commence on Nov 19.



**J.R. Jayewardene**

First Executive President of Sri Lanka. He served from 1978 till 1989.

- **Name:** Junius Richard Jayewardene.
- **Born:** September 17, 1906.
- **Family:** Married to Elina Bandara Rupasinghe. Has one son.
- **Education:** Royal College, Colombo, Colombo Law College.
- **Political party:** United National Party (UNP).
- **Profession:** Politician, Advocate.
- **Family background:** J.R. Jayewardene was the son of Justice Eugene Wilfred Jayewardene a Chief Justice of Ceylon. He was the eldest in a family of 11 children.
- **1943:** Elected to the Colonial Legislative Council. He entered the State Council by winning the Kelaniya by-election.
- **1947:** Became Finance Minister in the island's first Cabinet of D.S. Senanayake of the United National Party.
- **1965:** Became a Minister of State under a UNP Government.
- **1970:** Became the Opposition Leader in Parliament.
- **1972:** Became the leader of the United National Party.
- **1977:** Jayewardene recorded a landslide victory at the General Election and became the Prime Minister.
- **1978:** Sworn in as the First Executive President of Sri Lanka and served till 1989.
- **1989:** He retired from politics.
- **1996:** Jayewardene passed away at the age 90.



**R. Premadasa**

Second Executive President of Sri Lanka. In office from 1988 to 1993.

- **Name:** Ranasinghe Premadasa.
- **Born:** June 23, 1924.
- **Family:** Married to Hema Wickrematunge. Has two children.
- **Education:** St. Joseph's College, Colombo.
- **Political party:** United National Party (UNP).
- **Profession:** Politician.
- **Family background:** He came from a family of modest means. Politically a self-made man, he broke the tradition of the top leadership being in the hands of high caste landed aristocracy.
- **1950:** Elected as a Councillor to the Colombo Municipal Council.
- **1955:** Became a member of the United National Party.
- **1960:** First elected to the State Council from Colombo Central under the United National Party.
- **1968:** Elevated to the post of Minister of Local Government.
- **1970:** Became the Chief Opposition Whip and deputy leader of United National Party.
- **1978:** Premadasa was elected as the Prime Minister of the UNP government, a position he held for a decade. He implemented several development programmes such as The Gam Udawa and Janasaviya.
- **1989:** He won the Presidential Election and became the second Executive President of Sri Lanka.
- **1993:** President Premadasa was assassinated by a suicide bomber while participating in the May Day rally in Colombo.



**D.B. Wijethunga**

Third Executive President of Sri Lanka. In office from May 1, 1993 to November 12, 1994.

- **Name:** Dingiri Banda Wijethunga.
- **Born:** February 15, 1916.
- **Family:** Married to Wimala Kumarihamy. Has one daughter.
- **Education:** St. Andrew's College, Gampola.
- **Political party:** United National Party (UNP).
- **Profession:** Politician, Inspector of Co-operative Department.
- **Family background:** D.B. Wijethunga was born to a middle class Sinhala Buddhist family in Udunuwara in the Kandy district.
- **1946:** Joined the United National Party after serving as a private secretary to A. Ratnayake, Minister of Food and Co-operatives in the D.S. Senanayake cabinet.
- **1965:** Entered Parliament for the first time contesting Udunuwara electorate in the General Election.
- **1977:** Appointed cabinet Minister of Post and Telecommunication in the J.R. Jayewardene administration.
- **1989:** He was appointed Prime Minister by President R. Premadasa.
- **1993:** D.B. Wijethunga was sworn in as the third Executive President after President R. Premadasa was assassinated by a suicide bomber on May Day.
- **1994:** Retired from politics.
- **2008:** Wijethunga died after a prolonged illness on September 21, at the age 92.



**Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga**

Fourth Executive President of Sri Lanka served from November 12, 1994 to November 19, 2005.

- **Name:** Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga.
- **Born:** June 29, 1945
- **Education:** St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo, Aquinas University College, Colombo and Sorbonne University, Paris.
- **Family:** Married film star Vijaya Kumaratunga who was assassinated in 1988. Has two children.
- **Political Party:** Sri Lanka Freedom Party and later formed United People's Freedom Alliance
- **Profession:** Politician.
- **Family background:** The daughter of two former Prime Ministers, she is the only woman Executive President to date. Her father S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was founder of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and Prime Minister. Her mother, Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the world's first woman Prime Minister in 1960.
- **1974:** Became an executive committee member of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's Women's League.
- **1993:** She was elected as Chief Minister of the Western Province.
- **1994:** Elected as Prime Minister of the People's Alliance (PA) government at the General Election and the same year she was elected the executive President of Sri Lanka at the Presidential Election.
- **1999:** Re-elected to the Presidency and was sworn in for another term of six years.
- **2005:** Chandrika's six year term ended. Mahinda Rajapaksa succeeded her as the President from the UPFA Government.



**Mahinda Rajapaksa**

Fifth and incumbent Executive President of Sri Lanka. Serving from November 19, 2005 to date.

- **Name:** Percy Mahinda Rajapaksa.
- **Born:** November 18, 1945.
- **Family:** Married to Shiranthi Wickramasinghe. Has three children.
- **Education:** Richmond College, Galle, Thurstan College and Nalanda College Colombo, Sri Lanka Law College.
- **Political Party:** Sri Lanka Freedom Party, United People's Freedom Alliance.
- **Profession:** Attorney-at-Law, politician.
- **Family background:** Hails from a well known political family in Sri Lanka. His father D.A. Rajapaksa was a Member of Parliament and also a Cabinet Minister.
- **1967:** Mahinda Rajapaksa took over as the SLP candidate for Beliatta electorate.
- **1970:** First elected to Parliament at the age of 24.
- **1989:** Re-elected to Parliament from the Hambantota district.
- **1994:** Appointed as Minister of Labour of the new Government of the People's Alliance.
- **1997:** Held the portfolio of Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.
- **2002:** Appointed as the Leader of the Opposition.
- **2004:** Became the 13th Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.
- **2005:** Mahinda Rajapaksa became the fifth Executive President of Sri Lanka getting 50.3 per cent votes.
- **2010:** He was re-elected for a second term for the Presidency at the Presidential Elections held in January 26, 2010.

