

Sri Lanka Novice PM wins top job. (1994, November 10). *The Ottawa Citizen*.

SRI LANKA

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Update

What's new: The first results, in balloting from districts in southern, central and eastern Sri Lanka, showed Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga leading Srimala Dissanayake by almost a 2 to 1 margin for the executive presidency.

Background: For many voters, the election was a plebiscite on the first contacts in four years between the government and the Liberation Tigers, a group that for 11 years has fought to establish a separate Tamil homeland on this Indian Ocean island.

What's next: Kumaratunga has pledged to abolish the job by next summer.

By John-Thor Dahlburg
The Los Angeles Times

COLOMBO — Apparently looking for a peaceful way to end a long-running ethnic uprising, Sri Lankans on Wednesday entrusted the country's supreme office to their novice prime minister, who has pledged to abolish the job by next summer.

In an election that pitted two political widows against one other, the first results, in balloting from districts in southern, central and eastern Sri Lanka, showed Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga leading Srimala Dissanayake by almost a 2 to 1 margin for the executive presidency.

Immediately after polls closed, Dissanayake seemed resigned to losing, but claimed that she had been the victim of widespread vote-rigging.

Members of Kumaratunga's People's Alliance, or PA, government forecast a landslide win that they said would be a popular mandate to resume talks with Tamil rebels.

"If she's elected with an overwhelming majority, it endorses her peace policies," said Housing Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva.

Kumaratunga broke off groundbreaking contacts she had initiated with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam after the assassination last month of Dissanayake's husband, Gamini, by a suicide bomber.

Srimala Dissanayake, 51, a lawyer, was then named by the United National Party to replace her slain spouse as the opposition's top candidate.

She accused her opponent's party of engaging in ballot-box stuffing and voter intimidation.