

Sri Lankans vote in rare local elections

by UPI

BATTICALOA, Sri Lanka -- Election observers predicted a huge voter turnout Monday amid high security in the first municipal elections in the Sri Lankan city of Batticaloa in 14 years. Nearly 6,500 security officers took to the streets as voters chose candidates to fill 101 seats in the nine districts of Batticaloa. The city of a half-million people was liberated from the Tamil Tigers in 2007, the Sri Lankan Colombo Page said Monday. More than 800 candidates from nine political parties and 22 independent groups petitioned for the vacant seats. The opposition United National Party and the surrogate party for the Tamil Tigers, Tamil National Alliance, didn't participate, saying the climate wasn't conducive to having elections. Elections officials said all of their staff members reported for duty as they expected high voter turnout. There were no reported incidents of violence, the Ceylon Daily News said.

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