



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

Mahinda Rajapaksa as Sri Lanka's PM

Why in News?

Mahinda Rajapaksa has been appointed as the Prime Minister (PM) of Sri Lanka.

What does this appointment mean?

- This appointment consolidates the hold of the Rajapaksa family on power.
- The change was entirely on expected lines, after his younger brother, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, won decisively in the presidential election.
- Outgoing PM Ranil Wickremesinghe, whose party's candidate lost the election, submitted his resignation.
- This resignation enables the newly-elected President to appoint a new Prime Minister.
- **Country's constitutional scheme** - The President is directly elected, and heads the Cabinet, even while the Prime Minister he appoints ought to be one who commands a majority in Parliament.
- Even though the party of the Rajapaksas does not have the requisite numbers, it is unlikely to be an issue.
- This is so as it is expected to be only a caretaker regime until the next parliamentary elections, due in late 2020.
- **19th Amendment to the Constitution (2015)** - The President may dissolve the House 6 months prior to the end of its term.
- This effectively means it could be dissolved any time after March 2019.
- Mahinda Rajapaksa has emerged as Sri Lanka's most popular leader today.
- Only few will doubt that his acumen and personal charisma were crucial to his brother's victory.

What are the concerns?

- His presence in an official role in the corridors of power will be vital in the way the President runs the country and handles external relations.
- However, the prospect of the country's two most powerful offices being vested in a single family does raise concerns.
- **2015 mandate** - This mandate against Mahinda Rajapaksa was one for

reform and change.

- It led to the 19th amendment, which curbed the President's powers.
- This amendment curbed the power to dismiss the Prime Minister and his Cabinet at will, and the two-term limit on contesting for President.
- The question now is whether the gains it brought about for democracy will last.

What was Mahinda Rajapaksa's reaction?

- Mahinda Rajapaksa's reaction to the election result contained a specific reference to the complications in governance caused by the amendment.
- This also promised a programme of action.
- It would be a retrograde step, if they embark on any move to overturn the gains of the legislation.
- A return to ancien régime was undoubtedly one of the concerns of the minorities when they voted against Gotabaya Rajapaksa.
- [Ancien régime is a political or social system that has been displaced by another.]

What is India's move and what does it mean?

- India's move is to send External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to call on the new President.
- This has signalled an eagerness to preserve its traditional ties with Sri Lanka as well as its interests.
- It is welcome that India has conveyed its expectations that the process of national reconciliation would be taken forward by the new regime.
- It would be taken with a solution for the Tamil population based on equality, justice, peace and dignity at the core of it.

Source: The Hindu



IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative