

SRI LANKA DECLARES EMERGENCY AFTER VIOLENT PROTESTS OVER ECONOMIC CRISIS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is in the midst of its worst economic crisis in years with rolling blackouts for up to 13 hours a day as the government scrambles to secure foreign exchange to pay for fuel imports

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa declared a nationwide public emergency late on Friday following violent protests over the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

In a [Sri Lankan government](#) gazette notification, Rajapaksa said the decision was taken in the interests of public security, the protection of public order, and to ensure the maintenance of supplies and essential services.

On Thursday hundreds of protesters clashed with police and military outside President Rajapaksa's residence in a suburb of the capital, Colombo.

Police arrested 53 people and imposed a curfew in and around [Colombo](#) on Friday to contain sporadic protests that have broken out over shortages of essential items including fuel and other goods.

The island nation of 22 million people is in the midst of its worst economic crisis in years with rolling blackouts for up to 13 hours a day as the government scrambles to secure foreign exchange to pay for fuel imports.

Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse crowds near the president's residence on Thursday, after they torched several police and army vehicles.

One official said at least two dozen police personnel were injured in the clashes, but declined to comment on the number of protesters who were hurt.

Tourism minister Prasanna Ranatunge warned such protests would harm economic prospects.

"The main issue [Sri Lanka](#) is facing is a forex shortage and protests of this nature will hurt tourism and have economic consequences," Ranatunge said.

The U.N. representative in the country, Hanaa Singer-Hamdy, called for restraint from all groups involved in the clashes.

"We are monitoring developments and are concerned by reports of violence," she said on Twitter.

Trading on the country's stock market was suspended for a third consecutive day on Friday after the main blue-chip index fell 10% from the previous close.

This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed.

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