

SRI LANKA SLIDES INTO A DEEPER POLITICAL QUAGMIRE

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

The political crisis in Sri Lanka has seen many twists and turns since President Maithripala Sirisena removed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and replaced him with strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa in October. Lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to demand the reinstatement of Mr Wickremesinghe, but Mr Rajapakse has clung to the position despite not having the numbers in the Parliament. Mr Rajapakse and his allies, who do not have a majority in the House, have been boycotting the Parliament and Mr Sirisena has pledged he will not give the post of premier back to Mr Wickremesinghe. On Thursday, the Supreme Court ruled that Mr Sirisena's decision to dissolve Parliament and call fresh elections was unconstitutional, paving the way for his potential impeachment.

Mr Sirisena had earlier said he would accept the Supreme Court's verdict, and some believe this could be the only logical way out of the quagmire that Sri Lanka currently finds itself in. There are others who think fresh elections are the only viable solution in a country that occupies a strategic position in India's immediate neighbourhood. Domestically, there are also fears of government activities coming to a standstill from January 1 if the budget for the next fiscal year is not cleared. The political divisions have come at a time when Sri Lanka has been trying to shake off the effects of a deadly civil war that lasted more than a quarter of a century and build a more inclusive system that takes care of the interests of all sections of society, including the minority Tamils, who have a considerable impact on domestic politics in Tamil Nadu.

India was among the issues that led to differences between Mr Sirisena and Mr Wickremesinghe, with the president reportedly opposing the former premier's plans to award the eastern container terminal project at Colombo Port to New Delhi. The rehabilitation of hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils affected by the civil war also remains a priority for India. During the political crisis in the Maldives earlier this year, India learnt the value of the waiting game as opposed to any direct intervention, and it worked with other world powers to mount pressure on the authoritarian regime of former president Abdulla Yameen. It appears to have adopted a similar approach in the case of Sri Lanka, but the wait for the crisis to play out to some sort of conclusion could be a long one.

First Published: Dec 14, 2018 07:35 IST

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com