

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**CRISIS IN SRI LANKA**

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa quits amid the island nation's worst economic crisis.

About

- The Prime Minister of the island nation gave his resignation recently as the protests mounted pressure on him in the wake of the worst economic crisis the island nation has seen since independence.
- Sri Lanka currently is facing an economic crisis where its economy is running low on forex reserves and thus is not able to pay for essential import bills such as fuel, food items and other essential goods.

Why the Crisis?**Long run historical imbalance:**

- In a run up to 2019 elections, Mahendra Rajapaksa announced deep tax cuts in his manifesto which led to a steep fall in revenues.
- This severely impacted Sri Lanka's capacity to service the import bills which ultimately led to plummeting of forex reserves by 70 percent.

Huge infrastructural debt:

- Sri Lanka tried emulating the China led model of growth and development by rapidly developing the infrastructure for which it took huge long gestation loans without analysing the financial, ecological viability of the projects.
- This has led to a vicious cycle of debt and its interest payments.

Dwindling tourism sector:

- Sri Lanka primarily is a tourism led economy. The Easter bombing in 2019 led to sharp downfall in tourists' arrival which got further aggravated due to covid crisis thus leading to huge unemployment and revenue loss.

Misguided policies of the authoritative regime:

- In 2021, the Sri Lankan government declared that it would be opting for 100 percent organic farming thus wiping out conventional farming, deploying chemical fertilisers and HYV seeds at once.
- This led to sharp decline in grain production which compelled the government to import food items thus further aggravating the debt and balance of payment problem.
- Therefore, the President declared an economic emergency to contain rising food prices, a depreciating currency, and rapidly depleting forex reserves.

Impact of covid:

- Covid further exacerbated the already fragile economic condition in Sri Lanka.
- Exports of tea, rubber further took a sharp dip and the tourism sector with various backward and forward linkages came to halt.
- Remittances also dropped significantly.
- Government expenditure rose while revenue took a hit.
- This has led to a drop in sovereignty rating which means Sri Lanka will face problems while seeking loans from multilateral institutions and inflow of foreign investment will be hampered in near future.

India's role so far in helping Sri Lanka

- India has been instrumental in providing economic support to Sri Lanka in the wake of a severe economic crisis that, many fear, might lead to a sovereign default, and a severe shortage of essentials in the import-reliant country.
- Relief from India so far has been USD 1.4 billion - a USD 400 currency swap, a USD 500 loan deferment and a USD 500 Line of Credit for essentials
- India has also extended an additional USD 1 billion short-term concessional loan to the island nation to help the country as it faces an unprecedented economic crisis.

What lies ahead?

- The resignation of the incumbent PM gives way to the president to put opposition members in key government roles.

- However, the protestors are demanding the resignation of the President as well.
- Resignation of the PM will also dissolve the cabinet, raising questions about who would lead Sri Lanka's ongoing talks with the IMF for aid to buy food and fuel.
- Rising prices of everything from fuel to essential goods have kept the protests on in Sri Lanka and its inching towards sovereign default.
- Sri Lankan authorities have imposed a nationwide curfew and Army troops were deployed in Colombo.
- Protestors are demanding the government to form an interim administration to overcome the worst economic crisis.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**1. Unified Citizen Data Hub (UCDH)**

Recently, the Maharashtra government has decided to create a master database of all Maharashtra residents, coupled with a state-level unique ID.

- About Unified Citizen Data Hub (UCDH)

Meaning

- Data from all state government departments will be brought on a single platform to give a "360-degree view of citizens" and the government schemes and services that they have availed.
- Here, every individual is linked with their households.

Implementation

- The project is being implemented by the state Information Technology (IT) department.

Significance

- The idea is to create a golden record of every citizen with a layer of intelligence that can help the government in making data-driven decisions.
- The initiative is aimed at helping state government departments plan their schemes better, reduce the time spent in preparing fresh beneficiary lists for every scheme, and bring down instances of fraud or duplication of beneficiaries.
- It will do away with the fresh surveys needed every time.

2. Pantanal Wetland

The world's largest wetland, known as the Pantanal, in South America is at risk of collapse.

- This is due to a series of local and seemingly minor decisions that fail to account for their cumulative impact on one of Earth's most biodiverse ecosystems.

About Pantanal Wetlands

- The Pantanal is a natural region encompassing the world's largest tropical wetland area, and the world's largest flooded grasslands.
- It is located mostly within Brazil and extends to some portions of Bolivia and Paraguay.
- It is fed through the Paraguay River and tributaries.
- It sprawls over an area estimated at between 140,000 and 195,000 square kilometers.
- Roughly 80% of the Pantanal floodplains are submerged during the rainy seasons, nurturing a biologically diverse collection of aquatic plants and helping to support a dense array of animal species.
- It is designated a National Heritage by the Brazilian Constitution and a restricted-use region whose use should be ecologically sustainable.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. Critically analyse India's role with respect to various world affairs as the non-permanent member of UNSC. Do you think that the UNSC needs reforming? (250 words)

Introduction

India has criticised the slow pace of UN Security Council reform process and opaque methodologies, non-attribution of assertions and obfuscation of references by the member states which are blocking the early reform of the UN. What is ironical is, the permanent member of Security Council, Russia itself has waged a war on Ukraine while it is being given the responsibility to maintain world peace.

Body

India and UNSC

- India has adopted a multi-layered strategy to assume the long-awaited permanent seat in the Security Council consisting of two components:
- Maximising support in the UN General Assembly and Minimising resistance in the UN Security Council.
- India hopes that its continued engagement at various Global South forums such as G 77 and NAM, African Union would garner much needed numbers in the UNGA. This is reflected in India's strong defence of the principle of sovereignty and the constant voluble criticism of the "Responsibility to Protect."
- India's growing strategic partnerships with the P5, growing economic strength, including the nuclear deals with US, Russia paints a favourable picture for Indian Explicit public declarations supporting India's candidature as a permanent member in the Council are reiterated by countries like France, UK.
- India has also formed the G4 with Brazil, Germany, and Japan, its "coalition of the willing", and a "collaborative strategy" to negotiate reforms of the Council. The four nations support each other's bids for permanent seats on an expanded Security Council.

Need for UNSC reforms

Membership: The current membership of UNSC reflect post-WWII structure. It doesn't actually reflect the changes that have occurred in the international system after the end of the cold war.

- Emerging nations like India, Brazil, South Africa etc needs representation in the UNSC as permanent members.
- The existing membership reflects a regional imbalance, with no representation from Africa or Latin America and Europe being over-represented in the council.

Changed Geopolitics: The Security Council's membership and working methods reflect a bygone era. Though geopolitics have changed drastically, the Council has changed relatively little since 1945, when wartime victors crafted a Charter in their interest and awarded "permanent" veto-wielding Council seats for themselves.

Reforms Long Overdue: It was expanded only once in 1963 to add 4 non-permanent members.

- Although the overall membership of the UN has increased from 113 to 193 but no change in the composition of the UNSC happened.

Inequitable economic and geographical representation: While Europe is over represented, Asia is under represented. Africa and South America have no representation at all

Crisis of legitimacy and credibility: Stalled reform agenda and various issues including its Interventions in Libya and Syria in the name of responsibility have put the credibility of the institution in jeopardy.

North South Divide: The permanent UNSC membership of portrays the big North-South divide in the decision making of security measures.

- For instance, there is no permanent member from Africa, despite the fact that 75% of its work is focused on Africa.

Emerging issues: Issues such as transnational threats, deepening economic interdependence, worsening environmental degradation also call for effective multilateral negotiations based on consensus yet all critical decisions are still being taken by the veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council.

Way forward

- The imbalances in power relationships among P5 and the rest of the world needs to be corrected urgently.
- Also, it is needed to reform the Security Council through an expansion in permanent and non-permanent seats to enable the UN organ to better deal with the "ever-complex and evolving challenges" to the maintenance of international peace and security.
- India as the current one of the non-permanent members of the UNSC can start by drafting a resolution containing a comprehensive set of proposals for reforming the UNSC. Neighbours believe in its nuclear doctrine through effective confidence building measures.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements

1. Under the El Nino event, the surface temperature of the Pacific ocean increased more than usual causing heavy rainfalls in Australia.
2. While El-Nino leads to drought events in the subcontinent, La-Nina is primarily associated with flood events.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Neither 1 and 2
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) only 1

Q2. With reference to the Battle of Haldighati, consider the following statements:

1. It was fought between Maharana Pratap and Mughal forces led by Raja Man Singh.
2. Aftermath of the battle, Goganda, Udaipur, and Kumbhalgarh were all under Maharana Pratap's control.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Neither 1 nor 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) only 1**

Q3. With reference to Tissue Culture Plants in India, consider the following statements:

1. Plant seeds are cultured under controlled conditions of light, temperature, and humidity.
2. Netherland is the highest importer of tissue culture plants from India in 2021.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Neither 1 nor 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 2 both**
- (d) only 1

Q4. With reference to Judicial Activism, consider the following statements:

1. The concept came up in the United Kingdom.
2. It was introduced in India in the 1970s by Justice P N Bhagwati.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Neither 1 nor 2
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) only 1

Q5. Recently Supreme Court has asked the Government to give its view on Sedition Law. Consider the following statements regarding Sedition Law:

1. The law was originally drafted by Thomas Macaulay.
2. It was removed when the Indian Penal Code was enacted.
3. It was inserted in 1870 through Section 124A.

Choose the correct code:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above**