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PM Modi Urges Sri Lanka President To Implement 13th Amendment

Why In The News?

- Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe Held An All-Party Meeting To Discuss The **Issue Of Tamil Reconciliation And Welfare**.
- This Comes Days After His Visit To India, During Which PM Modi Conveyed To Him The Need To **“Ensure A Life Of Dignity” For The Tamil Community In The Island Nation**.
- PM Modi Also Expressed The Hope That Wickremesinghe Would Be Committed To Implementing The **13th Amendment To Sri Lanka’s Constitution** - Which Flows From The **Indo-Sri Lanka Accord Of 1987** - And Holding Provincial Council Elections.



Indo-Sri Lanka Accord Of 1987

- It Was Signed On **29th July 1987 In Colombo** Between The Then Indian PM **Rajiv Gandhi** And The Then Sri Lankan President **J R Jayewardene** In An Effort To **Bring The Sri Lankan Civil War To An End**.
- This Accord Saw The **Induction Of The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) In Sri Lanka**.

The 13th Amendment To Sri Lanka's Constitution

- In A Bid To Resolve The Ethnic Conflict In Sri Lanka Between Tamils And The Sinhalese, The 13th Amendment Was Passed In 1987 As Part Of The Indo-Lanka Accord, Which Was Signed By The Then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi And Sri Lankan President JR Jayawardene.



- At That Time, The **Tamil Insurgency** Was Gathering Momentum, Which Later Turned Into A Bloody **Conflict Between The Government And The Liberation Tigers Of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**.
- The **LTTE Demanded A Separate Tamil State** And Ran A Military Campaign Before Its Collapse In 2009 Following The Killing Of **Velupillai Prabhakaran**.
- Since Sri Lanka Gained Independence From The British In 1948, The Tamils Have Demanded Political Autonomy In The Northern And Eastern Regions. It Must Be Noted That **All Powers In Sri Lanka Are Concentrated In The Centre**.
- The 13th Amendment Provides For A **Provincial Council System And Devolution Of Powers** Over Land, The Police, Education, Health, Agriculture, Housing And Finances To The Nine Provinces Of The Country, Including Sinhala Majority Areas.
- However, **Its Provisions Were Never Fully Implemented** By Successive Sri Lankan Governments. The Amendment Also Provided For Making Tamil An Official Language, And English As A Link Language.
- Initially, The North And Eastern Provinces Were Merged, And A **North-Eastern Provincial Council** Was Created. However, They Were De-merged In 2007 Following A Supreme Court Verdict.



Why Has It Not Been Implemented So Far?

- The 13th Amendment Has Been Strictly Opposed By The Majority Sinhalese And Sinhala Nationalist Parties. The Sinhalese Have Argued That It Would **Undermine The Unitary Nature Of The Sri Lankan State**.
- Moreover, Sinhala Parties Saw The Accord As An **Imprint Of Indian Intervention And The Country Wielding Its Influence In Sri Lankan Matters**. Moreover, Sri Lankan Governments Under Different Leaders Have Refused To Part With Land And Police Powers In The Nine Provinces.
- Most Sinhalese Political Parties Have Continued To **Call For Scrapping The Amendment**. On The Other Hand, **Tamils Have Said That Not Enough Power Had Been Devolved To The Provincial Councils To Make Them Meaningful**.



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