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- ❖ **India-Sri Lanka Relations in the 21st Century**
- ❖ **China Factor in India-Maldives Relations**
- ❖ **National Education Policy 2020: Unleashing the Potential in Higher Education**
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Change of Guard in Sri Lanka

Economic crisis in Sri Lanka led to political crisis during 2022. Sri Lanka defaulted on its external debt and internal mismanagement of its economy and receded into crisis. Given the economic and geopolitical scenario of the world and the region, it would be extremely tough for the new incumbent to the office of President, not only to manage economy, externally as well internally, but to also strike and maintain a balance between India and China, which is so delicate, cumbersome and competitive.

Anura Kumara Disanayake stands elected as the ninth executive President of Sri Lanka. Disanayake received just 2.8% of the votes in 2019 Presidential elections, whereas he defeated his nearest rival Premadasa by 1,209,275 votes. Disanayake polled 5,740,179 votes against Premadasa's 4,530,902. National People's Power (NPP) the socialist alliance of Sri Lankan political parties and Disanayake's Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) had just three seats in 225-member Parliament. Until 2022, the NPP was on the fringes of Sri Lanka's politics. NPP follows centre-left political ideology. September 21, 2024 election was a paradigm shift in Sri Lankan politics in many senses. Run-off elections were held for the first time; Rajapaksa family stands ousted lock, stock and barrel; a left-leaning party has been entrusted with power are to name a few.

Disanayake's JVP has a tainted history and is branded as anti-Indian. His party started with revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology with Sinhala ethno-Nationalism. However, now it seems to have moved to centrist mainstream. The unprecedented mandate was delivered owing to the mass protests that destabilized Sri Lanka in 2022 on account of mismanagement of its economy and widely rampant corruption. The protest led to the eclipse of powerful Rajapaksa family and compelled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee from Sri Lanka.

Power came to Ranil Wickremesinghe with Presidency of Sri Lanka in July 2022 who was supported by Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party. SLPP was the party of Rajapaksa's. This made it obvious two things: (i) that in the Presidential elections Wickremesinghe stands least chance of winning; (ii) that after gaining power as President, Disanayake would dissolve the Parliament and call for fresh elections. Main reason behind was the mood of the people of Sri Lanka who were dead against even symbolic presence of Rajapaksa's family in any manner in any of the institutions of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, immediately after taking oath Disanayake on September 24, 2024 called for fresh elections on November 14, 2024 to constitute new parliament. Wikremesinghe was Prime Minister when Gotabaya was President. Dinesh Gunawardene was Prime Minister during electoral process and he resigned after Disanayake took oath, who later appointed Harini Amarasuriya as Prime Minister.

The new president will have to walk a tightrope as far as internal governance and managing external affairs are concerned. He is faced with number of challenges, some of the most obvious are: (i) liberating Sri Lanka from muddy economic cauldron; (ii) getting rather bargaining a better IMF agreement to protect national economic interests; (iii) integrate Sri Lankan economy with the global finance and markets; (iv) garnering strength in new Parliament after November 14 elections which would help towards forging national consensus with the IMF; (v) to keep the elite of the country away from his style of governance that he may adopt in future; (vi) striking a balance among—public debt, GDP, external debt servicing, and government revenue; (vii) evolve foreign policy that would earn the faith and trust of the external world in its economy and polity; (viii) last but the most important manage itself between two rival and highly competitive neighbours i.e., India and China.

— BK