



Wednesday, Jul 26, 2023

EPAPER TODAY'S PAPER

The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Home Get Access India Cities Videos Audio Explained Education Politics Opinion Entertainment |

TRENDING

Play
Crossword

See UPSC
offer

Govt
Exams

UPSC
Special

Express et
al

Health
Specials

[News](#) / [Explained](#) / [Explained Global](#) / [PM Modi urges Sri Lanka President to implement 13th Amendment: What is it, why India cares](#)

PM Modi urges Sri Lanka President to implement 13th Amendment: What is it, why India cares

What is the 13th Amendment to Sri Lanka's constitution, and what is India's role behind it? Why has it not been implemented fully so far?

Written by [Yashee](#)

New Delhi | Updated: July 26, 2023 23:44 IST





Salary Above 5Lac pa
Term Life Insurance...

AD Maxlife Insurance



Making life
comfortable

AD Mitsubishi Electric

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe in New Delhi on July 21, 2023. (PTI Photo/Atul Yadav)

Listen to this article

00:00 1x 1.5x 1.8x

Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe held an all-party meeting on Wednesday (July 26) to discuss the issue of Tamil reconciliation and welfare. This comes days after his visit to India, during which **Prime Minister Narendra 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.

Last week, Wickremesinghe had said the 13th Amendment would be implemented, subject to agreement among political parties in Parliament, the Sri Lankan newspaper *The Morning* reported. At the meeting on Wednesday, Wickremesinghe said all political parties must join talks to reach a consensus, “as the full implementation of 13A was crucial for the entire country”, *reported PTI*.

What is the 13th Amendment, and what is India’s role behind it? Why has it not

been implemented fully so far?

The Manipur video, Wickremesinghe's visit, and Witty Moments In Pa...



The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987

The 13th Amendment to Sri Lanka's constitution was made after the signing of the **Indo-Sri Lanka Accord between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J R Jayewardene**, on July 29, 1987 in Colombo.

Under the 1978 constitution, Sri Lanka had a unitary government, with all powers in the hands of the Centre. The Tamil minority in Sri Lanka was concentrated in the Northern and Eastern provinces, and the struggle for rights and greater autonomy here had flared up into the long and bloody civil war between **the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)** and the Sri Lankan government, with some other groups also involved. The 1987 Accord aimed at amending the constitution to transfer some powers to the governments of the country's nine provinces, thereby finding a constitutional solution to the civil war.

After the Accord, the constitution underwent the 13th Amendment to allow devolution of power to provinces.

Apart from the devolution of power, the Accord had other clauses, such as **Tamil and English** being adopted as official languages along with Sinhala, lifting of emergency on the "Eastern and Northern Provinces by August 15, 1987", surrender

of arms by militant groups, and “general amnesty to political and other prisoners now held in custody under The Prevention of Terrorism Act and other emergency laws”.

The Accord also says that “The Government of India will underwrite and guarantee the resolutions, and co-operate in the implementation of these proposals”.

Thus, Tamil groups in Sri Lanka have appealed to India multiple times to make sure the Accord is implemented fully, including earlier this month, before Wickremesinghe’s visit.

Best of Explained

[SC stops Gyanvapi mosque survey, for now: What are the issues in the Varanasi dispute?](#)

[ExplainSpeaking: Making sense of Rajasthan’s Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill](#)

[How Saudi Arabia under MBS is disrupting the football landscape](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

What about the 13th amendment’s implementation?

While the armed struggle had been in the Northern and Eastern regions, provinces across Sri Lanka were given greater autonomy after the amendment. The Central government retains land and police powers, while the elected provincial councils (similar to state Assemblies in India) can legislate on subjects like agriculture, housing, road transport, education, health, among others.

The separation of powers was never done fully, and while some are unhappy over too little devolution, the hardline nationalists raise alarms over the “weakening” of the Central government’s authority. The **Sinhala nationalists** also oppose the 13th Amendment as they see it as imposed by India. Moreover, the regions that the devolution was primarily meant for never benefitted much from it.

Under the Accord, the North and Eastern provinces were to be merged into one, temporarily, and later, a referendum was to be held to decide if they should stay together or have two separate provincial councils. Thus, elections to the merged North Eastern Province were held on November 19, 1988. However, little over three

months later, Chief Minister Annamalai Varadaraja Perumal moved a motion in the Council to declare an independent 'Eelam'. This prompted the President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, to dissolve the council, and impose President's rule, which lasted till December 2006.

Also in Explained | Nirupama Subramanian writes: Why new Sri Lanka needs a Tamil leader

The referendum on the two provinces was never held, and in 2006, Sri Lanka's Supreme Court ruled that the merger had been illegal. Thus, the Northern and Eastern provinces were separated again, on January 1, 2007.

Elections to the Eastern Provincial Council were held on May 10, 2008. The Northern province remained under Colombo's rule till September 21, 2013, when elections for the council were finally held.

Thus, while the Sinhala provinces saw regular elections and the political parties here benefited from the experience of grassroots politics, the North and Eastern regions stayed under the central government's control for long.

ALSO READ



China's 'missing' Foreign Minister removed from post: Who is Qin Gang, an...



Israel passes contentious law amid protests: What is this 'attempt to cur...



How Russia is tackling Ukraine's counteroffensive



Netanyahu scores another victory, but at what price?

Since 2014, provincial elections are pending across Sri Lanka. This is because Parliament is yet to amend a 2017 Act in Parliament, for reforming the election process by introducing a hybrid system of first past the post and proportional representation from the current system of proportional representation.