NEXT IAS

DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

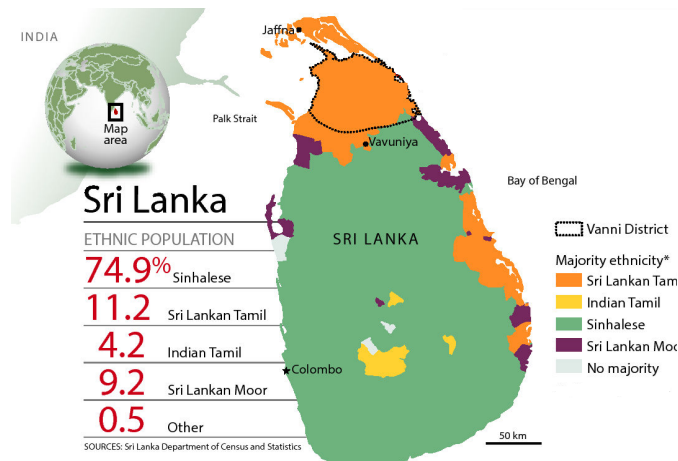## SETTLING SRI LANKA'S ETHNIC PROBLEM

SETTLING SRI LANKA'S ETHNIC PROBLEM

Context

- India's renaming of the Jaffna Cultural Centre to **'Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre'** reinforces its bond with Sri Lanka, addressing **Tamil concerns** over the initial omission of 'Jaffna'.

Historical Context: Sri Lanka's Ethnic Problem

- **Colonial Era:** British favored the **Tamil minority** in administrative and educational opportunities, creating **resentment among the Sinhalese majority.**

- **Post Independence:** Policies such as the **Sinhala Only Act of 1956** and **state-sponsored colonization of Tamil-majority areas** further exacerbated tensions.

- **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE):** Formed in the 1970s, sought an **independent Tamil state,** leading to a **protracted and brutal civil war** that lasted until 2009.

- **Sri Lanka's Constitutions:** *Soulbury Constitution of 1948 and two Republican Constitutions of 1972 and 1978* were drafted, based on the **British, American and French systems** of government.

- **The 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution:** It was introduced as part of the **Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987**, aimed to devolve power to provincial councils, thereby **granting greater autonomy to Tamil-majority areas.**

  - However, the full implementation of this amendment remains incomplete.

INDIA

Jaffna

Palk Strait

Map area

Vavuniya

Bay of Bengal

Sri Lanka

SRI LANKA

Vanni District

ETHNIC POPULATION

Majority ethnicity*

74.9% Sinhalese

Sri Lankan Tam

11.2 Sri Lankan Tamil

Indian Tamil

4.2 Indian Tamil

Sinhalese

9.2 Sri Lankan Moor

Colombo

Sri Lankan Moc

0.5 Other

No majority

SOURCES: Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics

50 km

Key Issues

- **Political Representation:** Tamil communities have long demanded greater political autonomy and representation.

  - The 13th Amendment aimed to devolve power to Provincial Councils, remains only partially implemented, leading to continued grievances.

- **Land and Resources:** Disputes over land rights and access to resources are central to the conflict.

  - State-sponsored settlements in Tamil areas and the military's occupation of land have fueled tensions.

- **Language and Identity:** Language policies and cultural rights are significant issues. The recognition and promotion of **Tamil as an official language, alongside Sinhala,** is vital for preserving Tamil identity.

Pathways to Resolution

- **Full Implementation of the 13th Amendment: India** has consistently urged Sri Lanka to take 'immediate and credible action' for the full implementation of the **13th Amendment** and **to conduct Provincial Council elections promptly** that can provide Tamil communities with greater autonomy and political voice.

- **Land Reforms**: Addressing land disputes and ensuring the return of occupied lands to rightful owners can help rebuild trust and foster reconciliation.

- **Inclusive Governance:** Promoting inclusive governance that respects the rights and aspirations of all ethnic groups is essential. This includes meaningful participation of Tamils in national decision-making processes.
- **Economic Development:** Equitable economic development that benefits all communities can reduce grievances and promote social cohesion. Investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure in Tamil-majority areas is crucial.
- **Cultural Recognition:** Promoting cultural and linguistic rights, including the use of Tamil in official communication and education, can help preserve Tamil identity and foster a sense of belonging.

International Support

- The international community, including India, has a role to play in supporting Sri Lanka's reconciliation efforts.
- Diplomatic engagement, development assistance, and support for transitional justice mechanisms can contribute to lasting peace.

Conclusion

- Settling Sri Lanka's ethnic problem requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses historical grievances, ensures political representation, promotes inclusive governance, and fosters economic development.
- However, the path to resolving Sri Lanka's ethnic problem remains complex and requires continued dialogue and cooperation.
- India's role as a mediator and advocate for the implementation of the 13th Amendment is crucial in fostering peace and stability in the region.

For India-Sri Lanka Relation in detail, please follow the link:

https://www.nextias.com/ca/current-affairs/17-12-2024/india-sri-lankan-take-up-regional-security-issues

Source: TH

Mains Practice Question
[Q] What strategies should India and Sri Lanka employ to effectively address and resolve the longstanding ethnic problem, considering historical context, political dynamics, and the aspirations of the Tamil community?