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India sends food, medicine donation to crisis-hit Sri Lanka

Індія надсилає їжу та ліки в постраждалу від кризи Шрі-Ланку

Шрі-Ланка отримала першу партію гуманітарної допомоги вартістю 16 мільйонів доларів США від сусідньої Індії, щоб допомогти пом'якшити серйозний дефіцит, спричинений найгіршою економічною кризою в країні за останній час. Було спалено багато будинків та майна діючих міністрів та політиків правлячої партії. Президент Готабая Раджапакса оголосив надзвичайний стан, надавши поліції та військовим широкі повноваження щодо пошуку, арешту та затримання підозрюваних. Протести, які закликали президента та його сім'ю залишити політику, призвели до того, що могутня династія Раджапакса майже повністю знищилася, а брат президента Махінда Раджапакса пішов у відставку з посади прем'єр-міністра. Перед цим двоє братів і сестер президента та племінник подали у відставку з посади міністрів Кабміну.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/india-sends-food-medicine-donation-to-crisis-hit-sri-lanka-1.5914943>

Sri Lanka received a first consignment of a US\$16 million humanitarian aid package from neighboring India to help mitigate severe shortages caused by the country's worst economic crisis in recent memory.

Gopal Baglay, the Indian envoy to Sri Lanka, delivered the donation from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Gamini Peiris late Sunday. The goods, worth \$5.6 million, include rice, milk powder and essential medicines.

They will be distributed among vulnerable families in different parts of the country, the Indian embassy said in a statement.

Sri Lanka is near bankruptcy and battling severe shortages of essentials from food, fuel, medicines and cooking gas to toilet paper and match sticks. For the past few months people have been forced to stay in long lines to buy the limited stocks.

The country's new prime minister said last week that petrol stocks ran down to a final day, worsening commuting problems and lengthening lines. But shipments of gasoline paid through an Indian credit line started arriving over the weekend.

Sri Lanka has suspended repayment of about \$7 billion in foreign loans due this year out of \$25 billion to be repaid by 2026. The country's total foreign debt is \$51 billion.

Separately, India has provided a \$3.5 billion economic assistance in the form of loans and buyers' credit for food, medicine and fuel.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has created political unrest with a protest occupying the entrance to the president's office demanding his resignation continuing past 40 days. Government supporters earlier this month attacked the peaceful protesters, sparking countrywide riots during which nine people, including a lawmaker who was beaten to death, were killed.

Many homes and properties of sitting ministers and ruling party politicians were burned. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa declared a state of emergency, giving police and the military wide powers to search, arrest and detain suspects.

The emergency lapsed last Friday because the government did not seek Parliament's approval within 10 days as required by the constitution.

The protests calling for the president and his family to leave politics led to a near-dismantling of the powerful Rajapaksa dynasty with the president's brother Mahinda Rajapaksa resigning as prime minister. Before that, two of president's siblings and a nephew resigned as Cabinet ministers.

The president himself is facing the prospect of having his powers significantly curtailed to strengthen Parliament under Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is directing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for a rescue package.

A constitutional amendment to curtail the president's powers is expected to be discussed at the Cabinet later Monday.

Tamil Nadu, which shares language and culture with Sri Lanka's minority Tamils, is separated by a narrow strait from the island's Tamil-majority north. The donation was prompted after dozens of families fled to Tamil Nadu because of the economic crisis.