

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
PAPER CLIPPINGS

15

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: International

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE 21/10/20

'Amendment needs referendum'

T.H. / 21/10/20

Sri Lanka's top court identifies clauses in legislation that need public approval

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

The controversial 20th Amendment aimed at enhancing the Sri Lankan President's powers cleared its first hurdle when the country's Supreme Court cleared it for passage. However, it identified four clauses that is said would require approval by the people at a referendum.

Informing Parliament of the top court's position on Tuesday, the Speaker said the proposed sections, including those exempting the President from being answerable to Parliament and providing him immunity from lawsuits, were against public sovereignty, and the-



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

refore needed approval in a public referendum, unless the sections are amended in line with the court's determination.

The Supreme Court's determination came consequent to 39 petitions filed by

Opposition parties and civil society groups, challenging the 20th Amendment Bill, based on arguments that "it impacts the sovereignty of the people" and seeks to make the judiciary and legislature "subservient" to the executive.

Unbridled powers

Following up on its poll promise, the Rajapaksa administration introduced the 20th Amendment Bill in order to roll back the 19th Amendment, a 2015 legislation that clipped presidential powers and empowered Parliament.

As per the proposed Bill, the President will have unbridled powers, while the Prime Minister's office will

be reduced to a ceremonial one. Though Opposition parties have expressed fear that the Bill threatens to reduce the legislature to a "rubber-stamp Parliament", wider Opposition emerged more recently, including from members of the influential Buddhist clergy, Catholic bishops and the National Christian Council.

While it remains to be seen what amendments the government might bring in, the Bill will be debated in Parliament on Wednesday and Thursday. If the four provisions cited by the Supreme Court are suitably amended, the Bill can be passed with a two-thirds majority.