Brazilian President Bolsonaro's Political Setback

What is the issue?

- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro recently made a decision to sack the country's federal police chief.
- Bolsonaro now faces a political setback due to this, as Brazil struggles with economic and health crises.

What were the effects of Bolsonaro's decision?

- Sèrgio Moro, one-time Bolsonaro ally and Justice Minister, recently announced his resignation in a press conference.
- He is one of the most popular and powerful figures in Jair Bolsonaro's far-right administration.
- He accused the leader of trying to interfere in the federal police.
- Then the Attorney-General moved the Supreme Court seeking authorisation for a probe into Mr. Moro's allegations.
- The top court approved a 60-day probe into the President's actions.
- The police were reportedly investigating two of the President's sons, both public officials.

What were the allegations?

- The investigations were over alleged fake news dissemination, corruption and mafia group ties.
- The President and his sons have dismissed the allegations.
- But the move to quickly replace the police chief with a "friend" of one of the President's sons has strengthened Mr. Moro's claim.
- He maintains that the President wants someone in the police "from whom he can collect intelligence".

What are the challenges before Bolsonaro?

- The probe comes at a time when the President's handling of Latin America's largest coronavirus outbreak is already under fire.
- Mr. Bolsonaro, who wants the economy to be reopened sooner, recently sacked his Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta over disagreements.
- Mr. Bolsonaro is not new to controversies.
- From his constant attacks on political rivals, activists, environmentalists and

sexual minorities to the controversial handling of the Amazon fires, he has triggered sharp criticism.

- But this time, he is perhaps facing his biggest crisis as President.
- Mr. Moro and Dr. Mandetta were relatively popular figures in his Cabinet.
- The alliance with Mr. Moro, a former judge, had been particularly strong.
- With Mr. Moro's resignation, Mr. Bolsonaro has lost a powerful ally.
- He is now surrounded by his unpopular far-right Cabinet colleagues and family.

How does the future look?

- Hundreds are dying from COVID-19 and the government appears to be clueless about its containment.
- Brazil's economy is expected to contract 5.3% this year, a sharp fall from the government's projections made earlier.
- Mr. Bolsonaro's approval ratings are also steadily falling.
- Left-wing Senators have already launched a campaign to impeach him.
- All these point to an isolated, unpopular President who is losing allies and followers and facing a police probe, at a most crucial time (grave political, economic and health crises).

Source: The Hindu

