Challenges for Lebanese Political System

What is the issue?

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Lebanon’s parliamentary election results has mounted frustration among voters with the government.

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What is happening in Lebanon?

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- In recent years, Lebanon has had a host of administrative and regional challenges while the government remained largely ineffective in tackling them.
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- There were protests in the nation over a breakdown of waste management, acute power shortage and the inward flight of Syrian refugees over several years.
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- Regional tensions are high as Hezbollah, Lebanon’s most powerful Shia movement that has been designated by the U.S. and Israel as a terrorist organisation, is involved in the Syrian civil war.
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What were the events during Hezbollah movement?

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- In post-civil war Lebanon, the political class is largely divided into two blocs.

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- The Iran-allied Shia bloc led by Hezbollah that has joined hands with Christian parties, and the Sunni bloc led by current PM of Lebanon Mr. Hariri that has close ties with Saudi Arabia and the West.
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- During the campaign, both sides whipped up their sectarian narrative since Lebanon claimed its Arab identity was being threatened by Hezbollah's Iran links.
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- While the Hezbollah-allied parties targeted Saudi Arabia and the West besides attacking the government for its failures.
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- In the event, Mr. Hariri's Future Movement suffered a big setback, its strength in the 128-member parliament shrank from 33 to 21.
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- While Hezbollah retained the parliamentary seats it had in the outgoing legislature, its allies have gained new seats making the alliance the largest parliamentary bloc.
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What are the challenges for Lebanon's political system?

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- Lebanon has a unique, confessional system in which the Prime Minister must be a Sunni, the President a Christian and the Parliament Speaker a Shia.
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- Being the leader of the largest Sunni bloc, Mr. Hariri could retain his job as Prime Minister despite the electoral setback.
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- But Hezbollah and its allies will have a greater say in government-formation.
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- Hezbollah could also stall government measures that target its clout.
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- With the regional fault lines between Iran and its rivals set to sharpen further after the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and rising Tehran-Tel Aviv tensions, it is bound to reflect on Lebanese politics.
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Source: The Hindu

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