Resignation of Italy's PM

Why in news?

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned after disagreements within the government; he, however, continues to be the caretaker PM.

How did the Conte government come to power?

- In the March 2018 parliamentary elections, an anti-incumbent vote helped the Five Star Movement and the League party get the most number of seats in the country's legislature.
- Notably, both are non-mainstream political groupings.
- Both Five Star Movement and the League Party ran on an anti-establishment agenda during the elections.
- No party got majority in the elections, and so, it was planned to keep the incumbent parties away and offer a populist alternative.
- Thus, in June 2018, both groups came together to form the government with Conte as Prime Minister.
- [Conte was relatively unknown before the 2018 national elections.
- However, he became the country's leader after the Five Star Movement and the League party sought a compromise candidate to lead their coalition.]
- Luigi Di Maio and Matteo Salvini, leaders of the Five Star Movement and the League party, respectively, were made as Deputy Prime Ministers.

What led to Conte's resignation?

- The coalition was more an opportunistic alliance between a far-right nativist party and a professed ideology-less anti-establishment group.
- The 5-Star Movement lacked any ideological alternative to offer other than its anger towards Italy's centre-left and conservative establishment parties.
- Serious disagreements emerged between the coalition parties while in government.
- Opinion polls suggested that the League Party could get up to 38% of the popular vote if polls are held soon.
- Mr. Salvini is thus on course to become Prime Minister.
- The current crisis was thus triggered by Mr. Salvini's decision to withdraw from the coalition.
- Eventually, Conte tendered his resignation without waiting for a no-

confidence motion.

Who is Matteo Salvini?

- The leader of the League Party, Salvini, was the interior minister in the short-lived government.
- The rebel leader has consistently promoted his party's rhetoric which is championing US President Trump and Russian President Putin while attacking the European Union.
- He pushed for his party's "Italy-first", anti-immigrant, anti-EU agenda.
- Salvini has a fiercely anti-immigrant stance and has called the intake of refugees as "organised migration".
- As Interior Minister, he banned migrant ships.
- He also challenged the EU fiscal orthodoxy by calling for tax cuts and spending rises.
- This appealed to the electorate still suffering under the effects of the debt crisis.
- Salvini has now reportedly become significantly more popular than before the elections.
- He is thus expected to lead the next Italian government.

What does this imply?

- Mr. Salvini's rise, from a regional leader in northern Italy to a popular nationalist political figure now, is also the story of Italy's political and economic crisis.
- When establishment parties shy away from addressing structural economic issues, the crisis opens avenues for anti-establishment forces.
- In effect, Italy's political centre is crumbling; the Left is weak.
- The 5-Star Movement does not have an ideological programme.
- Mr. Salvini, whose hard nationalist views echo the far-right politics on the ascent in Europe, seems determined to exploit the Italian crisis.

What next?

- Now, President Sergio Mattarella alone has the power to dissolve the parliament.
- He will be forced to do so only if there is no way for the government to continue.
- But most parties currently in Parliament, except the League, fear that an early election would turn the tide against them.
- So, the chances are high that Salvini would come to power.
- On the other hand, if the Conte government has to survive, the Five Star

Movement will have to find support from other political groupings in Parliament.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

