

## **Brief on India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations**

India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbor and the relationship between two countries is more than 2,500 years old, sharing a strong civilizational and historical connect. Sri Lanka has a central place in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision.

2. The bilateral relations are matured and diversified, encompassing all areas of contemporary relevance. The shared cultural and social heritage of the two countries and the extensive people-to-people interaction of their citizens provide the foundation to build a multi-faceted partnership.

### **Political Exchanges**

3. India-Sri Lanka bilateral political relations are marked by regular high-level exchanges. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi (PM) has visited Sri Lanka four times since 2014. The latest visit of PM to Sri Lanka was in April 2025 which was the first visit to Sri Lanka by any Head of State/Government since President Anura Kumara Disanayaka assumed presidency in September 2024. During the visit, a total of 7 MoUs covering various fields like defence cooperation, health & mass media, energy, connectivity, etc. were exchanged. The visit saw the conclusion of Bilateral Amendatory Agreements on Debt Restructuring. PM and President Anura Kumara Disanayaka jointly inaugurated 5 projects built with Indian assistance during the visit. PM also made several announcements including India's grant assistance for the development of Thirukoneswaram temple in Trincomalee, Sita Eliya temple in Nuwara Eliya, and Sacred City Complex Project in Anuradhapura; the Exposition of Lord Buddha relics in Sri Lanka; and comprehensive capacity-building programme in India covering 700 Sri Lankans annually. In recognition of his significant contribution to the advancement of bilateral ties, PM was conferred the 'Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana' award, Sri Lanka's highest honour bestowed on foreign leaders. PM has had three telephonic conversations with President Anura Kumara Disanayaka, in April 2025 (in the aftermath of Pahalgam terror attack), December 2025 (post Cyclone Ditwah) and March 2026 (to discuss West Asia conflict). Prior to this, PM visited Sri Lanka in June 2019 (to express solidarity after Easter Sunday attacks); March 2015 (first standalone bilateral visit by Prime Minister of India since 1987) and in May 2017 as the chief guest for first ever International Vesak Day hosted by Sri Lanka.

4. Most recently, Vice President Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan visited Sri Lanka from 19-20 April 2026 on an official visit. He was accompanied by Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel. At the Ministerial-level, EAM visited Sri Lanka nine times since 2019. These include visit in November 2019 (the first Foreign Minister to visit Sri Lanka post 2019 Presidential elections), January 2021 (the first foreign visit by EAM in 2021), March 2022 (to attend the BIMSTEC Ministerial meeting), January 2023 (to interact with the new Sri Lankan government headed by then President Ranil Wickremesinghe), October 2023 (to attend the 23rd Council of Ministers' meeting of the IORA), June 2024 (first bilateral visit of EAM after the assumption of office in the current term), October 2024 (first foreign dignitary to be received under Anura Kumara Disanayaka's Presidency), April 2025 (part of the official delegation in the PM's State Visit). EAM last visited Sri Lanka as PM's Special Envoy in December 2025 and

announced a USD 450 million comprehensive relief package to support Sri Lanka in its relief and rehabilitation efforts post Cyclone Ditwah.

5. Regular high-level visits including that of Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman in November 2023 (as Guest of Honour at 'Naam 200' event held to mark 200 years of arrival of IOTs) and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval in January & November 2020 and in August 2024 (for the signing of the founding documents of the Colombo Security Conclave), have sustained the momentum of strong bilateral relationship. Further, then Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan and Minister of State Dr. L. Murugan visited Sri Lanka in February 2023 separately for the 75th Independence Day celebrations of Sri Lanka and for dedicating the iconic Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Center respectively.

6. From the Sri Lankan side, President Anura Kumara Disanayaka participated in the recently held AI Impact Summit in India in February 2026. Prior to this, President Anura Kumara Disanayaka visited India on a State visit from 15-17 December 2024, which was his first overseas trip after assumption of Office. President Anura Kumara Disanayaka was accompanied by Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath and Minister of Labour Anil Jayantha. During the visit, he held discussions with Rashtrapathi and PM. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar, EAM, NSA and Minister of Health called on President Anura Kumara Disanayaka. During the visit, a joint statement titled 'Fostering Partnerships for a Shared Future' was issued. Both the sides exchanged Protocol amending the Agreement for the avoidance of the Double Taxation and a MoU for capacity building programme for civil servants. India announced financial assistance to 100 new students each annually from University of Jaffna and Eastern University and a grant assistance of USD 14.9 million for the signalling project in Maho-Anuradhapura section. He also addressed a business interaction in New Delhi and visited Bodh Gaya. Earlier, he (in his capacity as NPP leader) visited India as part of the 'Distinguished Visitors Programme' in February 2024 and met EAM, NSA. He also visited Ahmedabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

7. Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya visited India from 16–18 October 2025 to participate in NDTV World Summit during which she called on PM and met EAM. The Speaker of Parliament Dr. Jagath Wickramaratne visited New Delhi to participate in the 28<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference from 14-18 January 2026. Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa visited India from 3-6 November 2025 and met EAM, NSA and Minister of Health, in addition to other interactions. Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) General Secretary Tilvin Silva visited India from 5-12 February 2026 during which he met EAM and Deputy NSA in New Delhi and also visited Ahmedabad and Thiruvanthapuram.

8. Earlier, the then President Ranil Wickremesinghe visited India in July 2023 (*bilateral visit*) and in June 2024 (*to attend the swearing in ceremony of the new Government following Parliamentary Elections in India*). A vision document titled "Promoting Connectivity, Catalysing Prosperity: India–Sri Lanka Economic Partnership vision", centred around enhanced connectivity and deeper economic partnership was adopted during July 2023 visit. Before this, then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa visited India in November 2019 as his first overseas trip after assuming Presidency. The then Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa paid a State Visit to India in February 2020 as his first overseas trip after assumption of Office. PM also hosted a Virtual Bilateral Summit (VBS) with Mahinda Rajapaksa in September 2020, during which a joint statement titled

“MitratvaMagga - Path of friendship” was issued. In addition, former President Wickremesinghe participated virtually in all the three editions of the Voice of Global South Summit led by India, including the latest one in August 2024.

9. Other important visits include: Visit of a delegation of Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus of Sri Lanka Parliament led by Minister of Women and Child Affairs, Ms. Saroja Savithri Paulraj from 10-16 May 2026; visit of Foreign Minister Mr. Vijitha Herath to participate in the Raisina Dialogue 2026 from 05-07 March 2026; visit of Minister of Health & Mass Media Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa to participate in the Second WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit from 17-19 December 2025; visit of Minister of Ports & Civil Aviation Mr. Anura Karunathilake to participate in India Maritime Week from 27-28 October 2025; visit of Minister of Trade, Commerce, Food Security and Cooperative Development of Sri Lanka Mr. Wasantha Samarasinghe to participate in World Food India 2025 from 24-26 September 2025; visit of Minister of Energy Mr. Kumara Jayakody to attend 06<sup>th</sup> International Energy Conference & Exhibition (IECE 2025) from 23-24 September 2025; visit of then Minister for Urban Development, Construction and Housing Mr. Aruna Karunathilake to participate in the Kerala Urban Conclave 2025 from 12-13 September 2025; visit of Sri Lanka India Parliamentary Friendship Association (SLIPFA) delegation led by Minister of Health & Mass Media Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa in August 2025; ; visit of a multi-party Parliamentary delegation led by the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka Dr. Rizvie Salih for a week-long Orientation Programme by PRIDE in May 2025; and visit of Minister of Industries & Entrepreneurship Development Sunil Handunnetti for Bharat Tex in February 2025.

### **Trade and Commerce:**

10. India has traditionally been among Sri Lanka’s largest trade partners. The merchandise trade between India and Sri Lanka amounted to USD 7.18 billion in FY 2025-26, with India’s exports at USD 5.52 billion and Sri Lanka’s exports at USD 1.66 billion. The negotiations for finalization of the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) covering both goods and services was resumed after 5 years in October 2023, with the latest (14<sup>th</sup>) round of talks held in July 2024.

11. India is also one of the largest contributors to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Sri Lanka with cumulative investment of USD 2.94 billion till 2025 (*source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka*), with USD 213.67 million in 2025 (*source: Board of Investment, Sri Lanka*). The main investments from India are in the areas of energy, hospitality, real estate, manufacturing, telecommunication, banking and financial services.

### **Connectivity and Tourism:**

12. Connectivity has emerged as the main focus area of our bilateral ties, including maritime connectivity, air connectivity, energy & power connectivity, trade, economic & financial connectivity, digital connectivity and people to people connectivity. Important projects under this mechanism include commencement of ferry services between Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu and Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka (October 2023); extension of financial assistance for another year to support the ongoing passenger ferry service

between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai; resumption of air link between Chennai and Jaffna and Tiruchirapalli and Jaffna (since December 2022 and March 2025 respectively); and launch of UPI QR based payments in Sri Lanka (*virtually launched by PM and then President Ranil Wickremesinghe via video conferencing in February 2024*). *\*Other notable connectivity initiatives under discussion include Economic Land Corridor, for developing land access to Trincomalee and Colombo; multi-product pipeline connecting India and Sri Lanka and the power grid interconnection.*

13. In order to develop Kankesanthurai port, GoI has extended a grant of USD 65 million to GoSL and a MoU to formalize the arrangement is under negotiation. In parallel, discussions are ongoing to start ferry services between Rameswaram (TN) and Talaimannar which would require upgradation of infrastructure at respective ports.

14. Tourism is another important component with India being the leading tourist source market in 2025 with around 5.31 lakh arrivals (22.5% of Sri Lanka's tourist traffic).

### **Development Cooperation:**

15. India's development cooperation with Sri Lanka stands out as one of the most important pillars of our bilateral relationship. India's overall credit assistance to Sri Lanka amounts to over USD 7.5 billion, including emergency assistance of USD 4.1 billion and grant assistance to Sri Lanka which currently stands at over USD 850 million. GoI has been carrying out people-oriented development projects across the 25 districts of Sri Lanka, cutting across almost all major sectors including infrastructure, housing, health, livelihood and rehabilitation, education, agriculture, renewable energy, railways, industrial development etc.

16. Our biggest grant assistance project is the construction of 60,000 houses under the four phases of Indian Housing Project at a total cost of more than INR 1800 crore. The fourth phase covering 10,000 houses for plantation sector workers is pursuant to announcement made by PM in May 2017. India is also extending grant assistance of INR 300 crore towards implementing Sri Lanka Unique Digital Identity project. Some of the other prominent projects include the Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Center, upgradation of Northern Railway line and track-laying; installation of an advanced signalling and telecommunication system along the Maho–Anuradhapura Railway Line (converted from LOC to grant assistance); island-wide 'Suwa Seriya' Emergency Ambulance Service; construction of multi-specialty hospital at Dickoya; construction of a new surgical unit at Teaching Hospital Batticaloa; restoration of Thiruketheeswaram Temple at Mannar; developmental project package focusing on Indian Origin Tamils (*announced by PM during the visit of then President Ranil Wickremesinghe in July 2023*); project for solar electrification of Buddhist places of worship; multi-sectoral grant assistance for socio-economic development projects in the Eastern province; and Hybrid Renewable Energy project in 3 Islands off Jaffna. PM during his visit in April 2025 announced grant assistance for the development of Thirukoneswaram temple in Trincomalee, Sita Eliya temple in Nuwara Eliya, and Sacred City Complex Project in Anuradhapura.

17. Besides the developmental assistance, India has provided multi-faceted assistance to Sri Lanka, close to USD 4.1 billion, during the economic crisis in 2022. These include USD 500 Line of Credit (LoC) for supply of petroleum products; Currency

swap of USD 400 million extended to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI); USD 1 billion credit facility for supply of food items, medicines, fuel and industrial raw materials; Deferment of payment of liabilities of approx USD 2 billion under the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) mechanism by CBSL to RBI in 2022 (restructured into a single liability of USD 2.6 billion under Special Swap Agreement, including about USD 200 million in interest payments); and USD 55 million LoC for procurement of Urea Fertilizer. This was augmented by humanitarian assistance through donation of drugs, medicines, essential food items, kerosene, etc. India also played the role of first responder during the Covid – 19 pandemic by supply of vaccines and essential medicines from India, including donation of 500,000 doses of COVISHIELD vaccines in January 2021 and grant of 100,000 Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits in February 2022.

18. India launched 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' to assist Sri Lanka in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah. India has provided more than 1123 tonnes of relief material including dry rations, tents, tarpaulins, hygiene kits, water purification kits and about 14.5 tons of medicines and surgical equipment. Around 60 tons of equipment including generators, inflatable rescue boats and 248 tons of Bailey Bridge units were given. India also deployed two columns of National Disaster Response Force comprising 80 experts and K9 units, evacuating 150 stranded persons. A fully fledged field hospital with 78 medical personnel provided medical care in Mahiyanganaya in Kandy and catered to the needs of more than 7000 patients. Fully fledged medical centres were set up from BHISM Arogya Maitri cubes in Ja-Ela and Negombo. INS Vikrant, INS Udayagiri and INS Sukanya also provided immediate relief assistance. Two Chetak helicopters from INS Vikrant and three MI 17 helicopters actively involved in the evacuation operations, rescuing 272 survivors.

19. EAM during his visit in December 2025 announced a comprehensive relief package of worth USD 450 million, which includes USD 350 million INR denominated LOCs and USD 100 million of grant assistance. The package covers five sectors namely railway, road & bridge connectivity; housing & water supply; health & education; agriculture & livestock; and disaster preparedness. Under the comprehensive package, 5 Bailey bridges have already been inaugurated and the restoration work on the damaged sections of Northern Railway Line has already commenced.

20. Earlier also, India has been 'first responder' for Sri Lanka as Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard have assisted in Sri Lankan waters to avert large scale environmental damage incidents such as MV XPress Pearl in May 2021 and MT New Diamond in September 2020.

## **Defence & Security Cooperation**

21. High level defence engagements have been regular through visits of Service Chiefs from both the sides. In addition, Annual Defence Dialogue is held between the Defence Secretaries every year to review and add momentum to bilateral defence cooperation. There were continuous naval interactions and ship/submarine visits from India to Sri Lanka. Besides multi-lateral exercises, bilateral exercises SLINEX (Naval Exercise) and MITRA SHAKTI (Army Exercise) are held every year alternatively in India & Sri Lanka. Exercise MITRA SHAKTI was last carried out in India (November 2025) and SLINEX was held in Colombo (August 2025).

22. In terms of capacity building, Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), established with the grant assistance worth USD 6 million was commissioned during EAM's visit in June 2024. Indian Navy Dornier Aircraft was deployed in Sri Lanka from August 2022 to August 2025 for the purpose of maritime surveillance. Further, an MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed during the PM visit in April 2025. Additionally, India offers around 1200 training vacancies for Sri Lankan Armed Forces annually.

23. Security cooperation on counter terrorism and other related areas are also an important aspect of our bilateral relationship. The Colombo Security Conclave, which has emerged as a key platform in recent times to address regional security issues was further bolstered by the signing of founding documents in August 2024.

### **Cultural relations**

24. Significant cultural cooperation includes, establishment of Indian Gallery at the International Buddhist Museum in Kandy; restoration of the Thirukeeteswaram Temple in Mannar; exposition of sacred Kapilavastu Relics organized in Sri Lanka in 2012 to commemorate 2600th year of the attainment of enlightenment by Lord Buddha (Sambuddhatva Jayanthi), etc. In October 2021, the inaugural Colombo-Kushinagar flight was undertaken on the auspicious VapPoya Day, during which the sacred Kapilavastu Buddha relics from the Rajaguru Sri Subhuthi Maha Vihara of Waskaduwa was brought to India and displayed in several Indian cities including Kushinagar and Sarnath. Recently, a statue of Lord Buddha to Dharmayathanaya Temple was presented. India has also published the Pali Grammar book 'Namamala' and the Sinhala translation of Jataka Tales in early 2025. The Centre for Contemporary Indian studies (CCIS) has been set up at Colombo University. A long-term ICCR chair for Hindi has been set up at Kelaniya and Sabaragamuwa University. PM, during his state visit in April 2025, announced the exposition of Lord Buddha's relics found in Devnimori, Gujarat in Sri Lanka, which took place from 4-11 February 2026 at the Gangaramayya Temple in Colombo.

### **Capacity Building:**

25. During his state visit in April 2025, PM announced comprehensive capacity-building programme in India covering 700 Sri Lankans annually. Further, an MoU between the National Centre for Good Governance of India (NCGG) and Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) was signed during President Anura Kumara Disanayaka's visit to India in December 2024 for training and capacity building of 1500 Sri Lankan civil servants over the next 5 years. In line with PM's announcement, a total of 700 Sri Lankan nationals including Members of Parliament, Supreme Court Judges, Election Commissioners, Auditors, Media personnel, dairy farmers, craftsmen, local government representatives etc. underwent training /capacity building programmes across various institutions in India during FY 2025-26. Another 400 Sri Lankan civil servants have already undergone capacity building conducted by NCGG.

26. India also offers nearly 1000 scholarship slots annually to Sri Lankan students. Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Program, 402 fully-funded slots are offered every year to officials and other eligible citizens for short term training

programs. Also, over 2000 teachers in plantation schools in STEM subjects under multi-Sectoral grant assistance were also trained from August-October 2024. Indian institutes under 'Study in India' Program provide technical expertise across a diverse range of courses.

### **Indian Community**

27. The People of Indian Origin (PIOs) comprise Sindhi's, Borah's, Gujarati's, Memon's, Parsi's, Malayali's and Telugu speaking persons who have settled down in Sri Lanka and are engaged in various business ventures. The IOTs constituting about 1.5 million are mostly employed in either tea or rubber plantations, with some section of IOTs living in Colombo are engaged in business. In addition, there are about 7500 NRIs engaged in various professional fields in Sri Lanka. During the visit of Vice President to Sri Lanka in April 2026, Government of India has extended the eligibility of OCI card to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> generation IOTs.

(As on 30 June 2026)