

High Commission of India
Colombo

Indian vessels in Operation Sagar Araksha II

Commander of Sri Lanka Navy Vice Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne graciously received Captains of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) vessels which were deployed in Operation Sagar Araksha II as they arrived at Colombo Port for Operational Turn Around on 10 June 2021. He acknowledged the huge support provided by these vessels and specially thanked India for its prompt response to the incident involving the MV XPress Pearl. Captains briefed the Commander about their role in the Operation particularly about Samudra Prahari, which is a specialized pollution response vessel.

2. High Commissioner of India H.E Gopal Baglay, who joined on the occasion, thanked the Commander and Sri Lanka Navy for extending whole-hearted cooperation to the Indian vessels throughout the Operation. He conveyed that it was not merely the geography that bound India and Sri Lanka in the maritime sphere, but the tradition of close cooperation in responding to emergencies such as HADR and accidents at sea as evidenced in Operation Sagar Araksha I & II. He underlined that bilateral mechanisms to appropriately respond to emergency situations in the shared maritime space is the need of the hour. He also highlighted that as India and Sri Lanka work jointly towards ensuring safety and security in the shared maritime space, it was important to remain adequately prepared for natural disasters and man-made catastrophes as they could recur.

3. It maybe recalled that the ICG vessels were deployed since 25 May, hours after receiving a request for assistance from Sri Lanka Navy to douse the fire onboard MV XPress Pearl and also provided pollution control help. The three ICG vessels along with ICG Dornier were actively involved in the efforts towards dousing the fire onboard MV XPress Pearl. Pollution Control Vessels were able to assist in assessment of Maritime Pollution Threats and were fully equipped to mitigate environmental concerns. Combined operations by India and Sri Lanka were testimony to jointmanship and interoperability achieved between the maritime services of the two countries.

4. Similar vessels of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard were deployed in support of the efforts to control and extinguish the fire onboard MT New Diamond off the Sri Lankan Coast in September 2020. Over the years, India has emerged as the first

responder in the region in dealing expeditiously and successfully with humanitarian disasters or maritime accidents. This trend is in line with the vision of SAGAR- Security and Growth for All in the Region and also reflects our commitment to the Neighborhood First policy.

Colombo
10 June 2021